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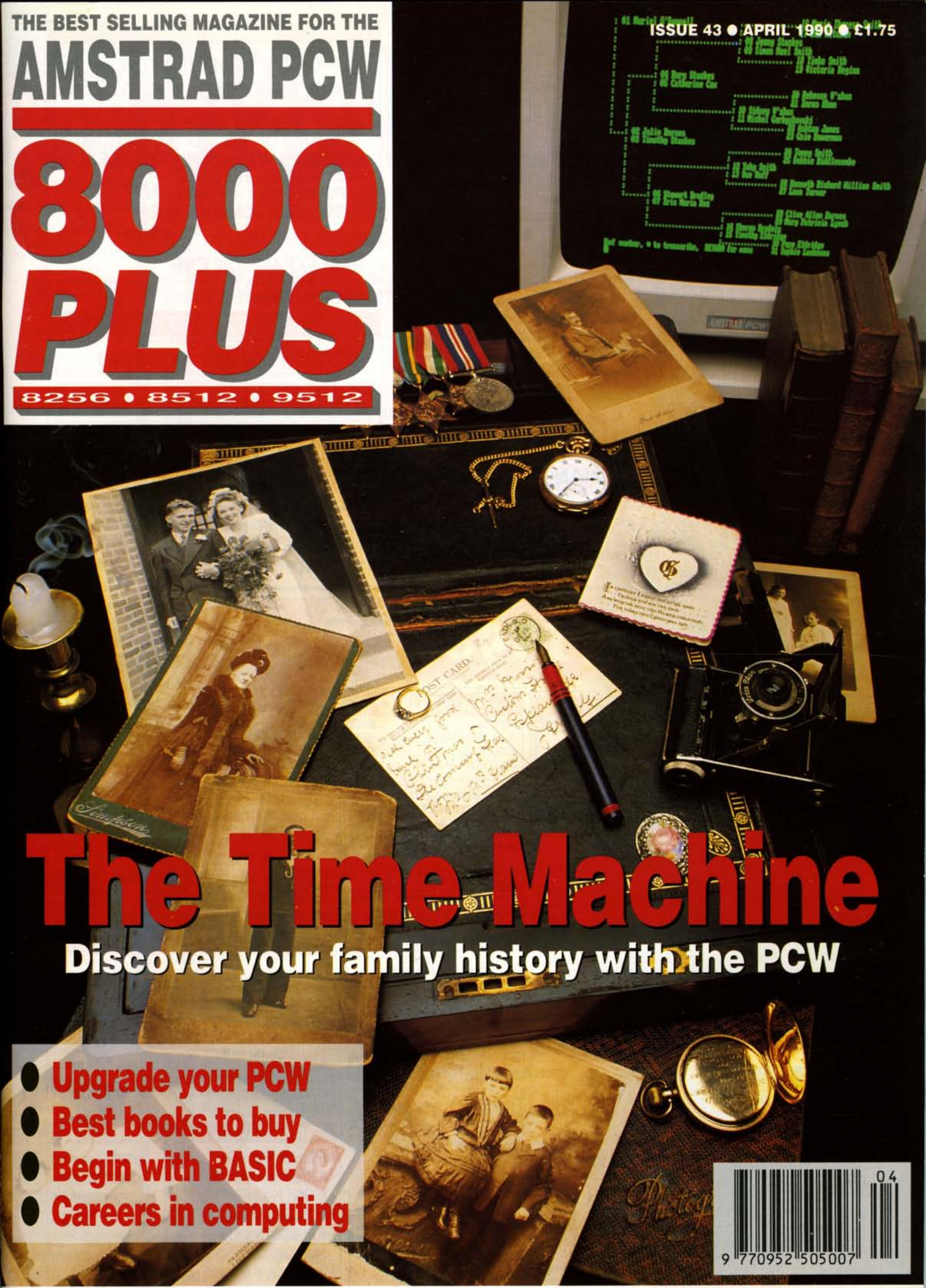
8256 • 8512 • 9512

ISSUE 43 • APRIL 1990 • £1.75



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MIDDLESEX UB7 7QE

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Follow our foolproof step by step walkthrough; you can't go wrong

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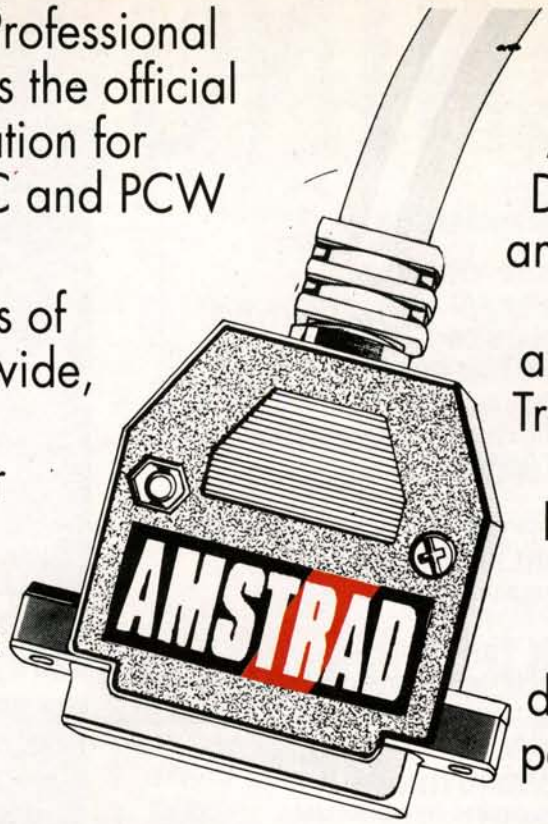

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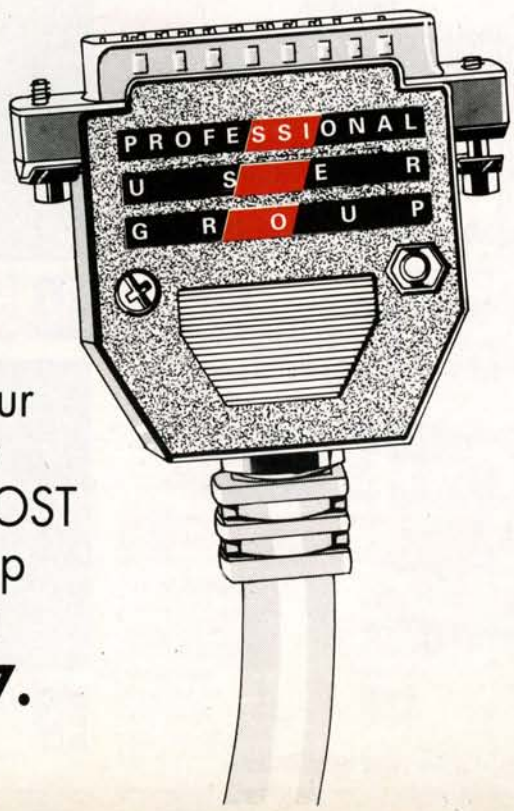

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Going home

PCW owners are not like other dedicated computer users. That's because many of you bought your machines exclusively for home use to help you pursue a particular interest or hobby. Although there is nothing to stop the business-conscious PCW owner from harnessing the machine's power to increase his or her productivity, not everyone is necessarily interested in 'go-faster' software offering vapour-trailed efficiency.

The non-business software market is a perfectly legitimate one. And the PCW has shown that it's not averse to stretching its talents into areas that may be considered 'off the beaten track.' Take, for example, the family historians that we spoke to in the course of putting together this month's cover feature.

A close inspection of family history computer groups dotted around the country reveals that many members are bringing the benefits of modern computing – principally in the form of Amstrad PCWs – to bear on a subject with which it would appear to have nothing in common whatsoever; undoubtedly, a successful marrying of the old with the new.

Okay, genealogy might not be everybody's cup of tea, but it illustrates a point: the PCW is able to exert a postive influence in areas of home computing that aren't any the less legitimate because they are unusual.

Journeying into the past with your PCW can be just as productive as basing data or spreading sheets. So, don't feel guilty, if, as a home user, you feel no desire to explore these options. Your PCW represents the acceptable face of home computing, and, as such, it should be working at all times with you, not against you.

So, as the magazine that's trying to make that true for most PCW owners most of the time, don't forget to tell us about it, will you?

Are you a winner?

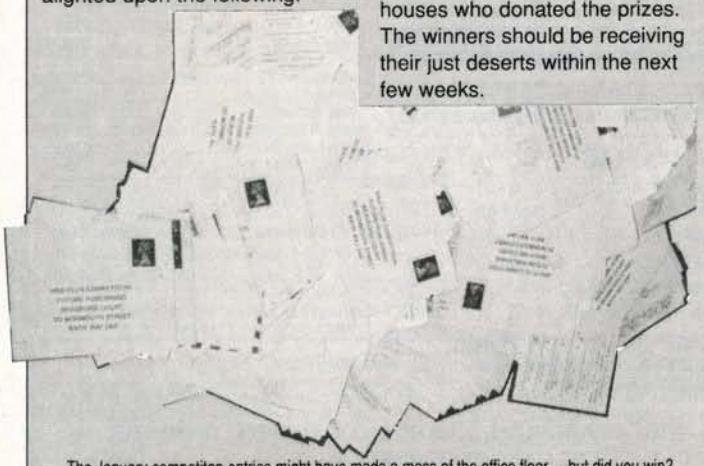
Every month sees another 8000 Plus competition (see the back page of this issue for the chance to win PCWdraw) but the January contest seemed to exert a strange pull on our readers. Maybe it was the fact that the first prize was a Cirtech Diamond hard disc, or maybe it was because the second prize was a Hayes modem – these two alone are worth around £600. Or maybe it was because the other thirteen prizes looked so good. Whatever the reason, the entries came in their thousands and not just from dear old blighty.

We had replies from as far afield as Poland, France, Ilford, Germany, Oman, Spain, Belgium, Eire, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. Most of the population of Luxembourg appear to have entered (we're sorry that neither of them were picked out of the office skip). But now for the people who were chosen.

Our new Production Editor Sophie Lankenau was given the task of wading through the cards to pick the winners and her hand alighted upon the following:

1st prize of the Cirtech Diamond hard disc
– **Mr D C Owen, Lancashire**
2nd prize of the Hayes modem
– **Ms I Gashes, Isle of Man**
3rd prize of the SCA Interface
– **Lief Nielson, Sweden**
4th prize of the Composer's Pen
– **Mr Anderson, Jersey**
5th/6th prizes of Protext –
– **Mr R F Warren, Bedford**
– **Ms M Hogg, Liverpool**
7th/8th prizes of Masterfile 8000
– **Mr J Morris, Edinburgh**
– **Mr J Oxely, Cambridge**
9th/10th/11th prizes of LocoFile
– **Mr P Muff, Gloucester**
– **Mr M Keeble, Ipswich**
– **Mr J Anderson, New Zealand**
12th/13th/14th/15th prizes of Streamline BASIC
– **Mr S T J Wright, Essex**

Thank you to all the other entrants who were not lucky enough to be drawn. Thank you to the person who got everything correct, was drawn but didn't put their name and address on the card. And finally thank you to all the software and hardware houses who donated the prizes. The winners should be receiving their just deserts within the next few weeks.



The January competiton entries might have made a mess of the office floor ... but did you win?

NEWS

by Tim Smith

New kid on the block

Welcome to our new Production Editor. Sophie Lankenau is hoping that during her time on 8000 Plus she will be able to travel the world and help needy children. So far she has found that the job is more a case of travelling to the sandwich shop to keep the Editor in brie and avocado baps ...

8000 Plus in new staff member shocker!

The mouse that roared

The lastest incarnation of the Kempston mouse.

A long-standing PCW relationship has been renewed. Kempston are to market a new mouse for the PCW. Previously they had used the Swiss-based mouse manufacturer Logitech to produce the actual hardware which was compatible with software as diverse as Micro Design II and Kempston's own DataFax organiser package.

Deciding to move away from Logitech meant that, according to a spokesperson at Kempston, "We have had to wait some time for a good source of hardware and eventually agreed a deal in the Far East." The company who now make the mice is Taiwanese based-Naksha. They have an excellent reputation and also make the only mouse which is compatible with the Commodore Amiga, Atari ST and the PC. Agreeing an OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) deal – otherwise known as badging – with Naksha looks like excellent news for PCW owners. What badging actually means is that while Kempston don't actaully make the product, their name will be emblazoned upon it.

The mouse looks elegant and feels substantial.

● *Cover Story*

This month's cover was inspired by our genealogy feature on page 10. All the items included are personal possessions of the 8000 Plus team. Photography by Ashton James.

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Access VISA

Unhappily we only received our model late on in the month, so for a more in-depth review, read next month's 8000 Plus.

Asked whether Kempston had plans for any further PCW releases in the near future, we were told, "We've got something bubbling along which we won't announce at the moment. We will keep you informed."

The new mouse comes packaged with two pieces of already popular software. These are, Jeeves, the PCW helpmate, and DataFax, the personal organiser program. All this will cost you £69.95 (plus VAT). If you have the software then Kempston will sell you the mouse alone for £45.95 (plus VAT). Finally, Kempston tell us that they have a bundled package of Micro Design II and the new Naksha/Kempston mouse for £99.95 (plus VAT). If you would like to contact Kempston, you should call the following number: 0234 855666.

And the mouse that squeaked

If you've been having trouble trapping an AMX mouse of late, it's no surprise. Richard Vanner, the Development Manager of Database Software, who are UK distributors of the versatile vermin told us, " We get our mice from AMS, who have let us down badly. The problem is a manufacturing one, which is going to take about three months to resolve."

AMS were unavailable for comment at the time of going to press. The release of the new Kempston mouse (see ' The mouse that roared') is, it seems, good news for some, and cold comfort for others...

Design of your life

Creative Technology, makers of the excellent Micro Design II desktop publishing package, have just published the second edition of their quarterly newsletter, *The Microdesigner*. Along with this, came a press release in which they inform us of the following changes.

There is another collection of fonts now on the market. It costs £14.95 and contains typefaces for main body copy and large headlines. They also recommend the fonts available from HD Design, Exemplar Design and AC Booth Illustrations.

We are also told that Groundwork (see Ground control) can produce 'high-quality scanned images' for use with the PCW. If this is not enough, there is also news of laser-printing bureaux which have Creative's seal of approval. In fact there is so much to tell you that soon we hope to be talking to Creative Technology about Micro Design II and a whole range of other subjects. Of course this will be relayed to you in the magazine as soon as it happens. If you can't wait you might like to call the company on 0889 567160 (the fax number is 0889 563548).

A vague on both your houses

The Software Imperative stable is to expand. Following the success of Flipper2, proprietor Andy Wilton is rumoured to be launching a new product in early May. Few details are available – except that although it is "not exactly" a

Andy Wilton of Software Imperative ... new product afoot?

CLUB NEWS

Hampshire openers

No, not Greenwich and Richards (Barry that is – or is club news showing its years?) but the Hampshire PCW User Group. Ah ... Hampshire, home of Sir Percival Glyde. But it is also home to Chairperson Ray Lee, Membership Secretary Peter Bassett and Group secretary Paul Day.

We haven't heard much from Hampshire in the last few months and so were gratified to receive a rather smart-looking newsletter. It appears that the club has been re-vamped with a vengance and 1990 looks like being a packed year. Scheduled events are as follows:

Monday 2nd April is SuperCalc2 day.
Tuesday 1st May is a celebration of BASIC and CP/M
Wednesday 6th June is L(ocoMail)-Day
Thursday 5th July sees a LocoScript forum
Monday 6th August is a visit from the Money Manager

Along with this lot are planned various other question and answer sessions with the club's Brains Trust, a meeting on 24-pin printer installation and much more. They have even started to plan the Christmas meetings. This looks like some pretty in-depth organisation to us and for the membership fee of £10.00 per annum it can't be bad. So far the membership of the club stands at 32 and we can only hope that more people see fit to join in the near future.

If you would like to find out more about the club, you should try and contact the membership secretary Peter Bassett at the following address: 27 Fellows Road, Farnborough, Hants, GU14 6NU

Is there anybody out there?

Several requests have been made to us via fax, mail, carrier pigeon and 'phone. All of them related to parts of the country which, it appears, do not have PCW clubs. This cannot be allowed and so we now present the 8000 Plus guide to the unknown world ... are there any organisations in or near the following areas:

Redhill in Surrey,
Aberdare in Wales
Nuneaton
Scotland – highlands, lowlands, midlothian or even the islands?

In fact are there any clubs of which we have not been made aware? Even better still, would you like to start a club but don't know how to get into contact with other people? If so, please write to Club News at the following address: Club News, 8000 Plus, Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2AP. Please only contact us if you run a club or wish to begin one. For those of you who wish to join clubs, we hope to be publishing a guide to available organisations in the very near future.

Make a wish

It is a sparse month indeed which sees no mention of HAG, (The Hereford Amstrad User Group). So, what has been happening down (or up or across depending on where you live) there?

David Rose tells us that all this vile weather made attending the most recent HAG meeting a task fit for the SAS. However, rain lashed and wind blown though they were, the HAG members reached the appointed place at the appointed hour. In fact one member endured such blustering and drenching in order to be there that David Rose of the club deemed it necessary to award the first HAG medal for gallantry. So, to Bob Ellis goes the HMG.

The meeting which everyone was trying so hard to attend saw a talk on CP/M – this came with a free-printed tutorial and examples disc. The talk was so successful that it has been decided to set aside half an hour a month to deal with one area of CP/M.

Finally, it's time for all the rest of us to leap out from behind the sofas, cupboards and tables, blow the long-squeaky things and yell "Happy birthday!" Because HAG is one year old. Many happy returns. If you would like to party (while being delightfully informed) you should phone David Rose on 0432 267123.

The world is their oyster

Gerry Austin of PCW World User Group writes to tell us that membership has risen to 600. PCW World is unlike any other club in that it does not meet in one place, in fact it does not meet at all. It is rather an organisation which is able to provide its members with cheap discs, plastic disc cases and now a disc translation service.

This service will translate from several different formats such as MSDOS, BBC, and 200 CP/M formats. The cost of this is £3.95 to non-members and £2.95 to members (plus the cost of a disc and post and packing).

If you would like to find out more about the club you should contact Gerry Austin on 0384 66269

word processsor, the product is " something which word processor users will find very useful", Mr Wilton described the project as a "writer's tool".

As well as working to complete the new release, Software Imperative are acting as consultants on the de-bugging of Mini Office Professional Plus from Database.

Chris Payne of Database commented on the (year) late release of Mini Office Plus, "Our mistake was to believe the programmer. They always tell you that they'll have something finished tomorrow, but we have learnt to our cost that they can be wrong".

If you purchased the original version, which Chris Payne admits was beset by "inconsistencies and inconveniences", Database suggest that either you continue waiting, or, that you obtain a full refund – but only if you bought your copy direct from the company. Alternatively, they will replace the original with a new Mini Office Professional (£39.95) minus spellchecker and thesaurus, but plus a £10 voucher to purchase the bug-free version when ready.

Database Software are on 0625 878888. Software Imperative's 'phone number is 0225 425315 (although the new project will be keeping them very busy indeed!)

The price-hiker's guide

As we said in December, Amstrad's rather less than brilliant financial showing over 1989 didn't, as some people had suggested, mean the end of the company. Of course, we were quite correct.

Amstrad have recently announced that £114 million worth of debts had been written off and their share price has risen accordingly. The bad news, for those people who don't already have a PCW, is that they are increasing the price of 8000 series PCWs by £30. The 9512 will not be affected. Just why they are doing this is anybody's guess ... we think it's because the machines are so popular that people will keep on buying them no matter what.

Protect and survive

What happens when your PCW breaks down? Many PCW owners still seem to be unaware that they have a one year warranty on their machines. This means that if anything does go awry, Dictaphone Ltd should come storming around to your home. This is the company

Mike Graham, a wiseman at Wisemans?

who hold the maintanence agreement with Amstrad.

But what then happens if, after the free year, you don't take out insurance? Up until now, very little, except for phone calls to Amstrad, waiting for parts or hunting around for a shop who can supply the goods ... but not the service.

Well, good news is upon us. A company called Wiseman's PLC, " a company with over 25 years experience in insurance and extended warranties" in concert with the Amstrad Professional User Group have let loose a scheme called Restart, an extended warranty which begins where the Dictaphone coverage finishes.

There are several Restart options which all fall into two camps. Either 'Back to base' – which entails you sending the faulty machine to the company – or 'On-Site'. As an idea of cost, a 3 year Return to Base costs £48 while a five-year, On-Site would come in at £249.

Because Restart falls under insurance services, there is no VAT chargeable. Prices also include labour and parts.

If you would like some in-depth information on Restart you should call 0784 252 548.

Ground control

John Hunt and Penny Hitchin are two lucky people; not only do they live in the Lake District but they also have an interesting, and healthy business. Groundwork is the name of the business which covers a great many activities.

One of these is called Into Print and, as the name suggests, it is concerned with getting your work out of your PCW and into book form. They told us that, " Our special interest in the PCW is seen as rather eccentric by some people ... According to their logic, any writer or would-be publisher who takes themselves seriously buys an Apple Macintosh! We're not sure. The PCW owners we've talked to seem intelligent, serious people who see their computer as a working tool rather than a toy or a status symbol. Our aim is to provide a link between the PCW and professional-standard publishing."

John Hunt of Groundwork, lakeland laser printing

They have already published a few works and while doing that they realised that many people actually wanted training as well as publishing. Bear in mind that they steer away from publishing works of fiction. So, with this in mind they also produce a wide range of training materials and also run on-site courses. These take place in the Wordsworths' favourite place in the world. We hope to be taking a much more detailed look at Groundwork in the near future but if you would like to find out about any of the services provided by the company you should speak to the affable partnership of John Hunt and Penny Hitchin on 05395 33600.

They're off! in the Abu Dhabi

The PCW gets all over the place and no mistake. News just in is that Computer Training Centres (UK) Ltd have set up a training centre in the Middle East. The company tell us that they have contacts in Somalia,

CTC train anytime, any place, anywhere.

Oman, Yemen, Dubai and Indonesia. The Joint Venture is called International Trading Centres or ITC.

CTC also have offices in this country and can offer PCW training in such packages as Micro Design II. Their latest offer is for a weekend in Bournmouth, this entails one day's training, plus accomodation and food for £150.

They are looking for franchising agreements in the country. To get the low-down on training or franchising, you can call CTC (UK) Ltd on 0202 299676.

SNIPPETS

Not Stephen King at all

Last month's Demon writer article by Chris Westwood (author of A Light in the Black – Kestrel Publishers) was a little zealously sub-edited. We would like to make it clear that although Peter Straub and Stephen King have written a book together they are not the same person. We would like to make it even more clear that Chris Westwood never said that they were the same person ... that was our fault. So many apologies to Chris for that.

Locomotivski

Locomotive Software have taken LocoScript and family to Moscow for a huge trade fair –Comtek 90. This actually runs from March 6th-12th if you want to visit. The company have taken Cyrillic fonts and such like and will be in good company since Amstrad are also going to be there.

Локо Скрипт

What next? LocoSummit or LocoSalt II maybe.

The star of the show

Not happy with simply appearing with Russ Abbot, Trevor Eve and Bleak Eyes (by the way, the PCW in the last of these was not used by Nigel Planer – that was a Mac – but was the one on the secretary's desk in the model agency!), the PCW has now appeared in the She advert, Eastenders and, as pointed out by N S Ruddock, with Mel Smith in Colin's Sandwich. Anymore sightings on stage or screen? Please let us know.

Saints alive!!

When you read this month's genealogy feature on pages 10, 11 and 12 you will probably wonder exactly what the link is, on the last page, between the Church of the Latter Day Saints - otherwise known as the Mormons - and parish registers. Well, the Mormons have a theory – that of vicarious baptism (or baptism of the dead). In order to baptise the souls of those departed, they need to be able to fully ascertain the identity of the individual concerned; hence their preoccupation with parish registers, bishops' transcripts and other forms of genealogical reference.

Just in!

The new ABC figure for the magazine is 29,688 - a 4% year on year increase on last year's.

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PEDIGREE CHUMS

Sharon Bradley and a couple of 8000 Plus readers harvest the fruits of their family trees with a little help from their PCWs

Computers and genealogy

The Society of Genealogists produce a quarterly 48-page magazine entitled Computers in Genealogy. An annual subscription to the magazine will cost Society members £8 and non-members £9.50. Editor Eric Probert does welcome unsolicited articles providing the subject matter is relevant. For back issues or further information, call the Society on 01 251 8799.

Stumbling, inadvertently or otherwise, across information that has a direct bearing on your long-deceased relatives usually provokes one of two reactions: you either permanently assign to some forgotten corner of the house the musty 'photo albums and other mildewed relics of a bygone age, clutching at the principle that Ignorance must be bliss – or you start scavenging, intent on unearthing the long-buried traces of a personal heritage that has, quietly behind the wings, determined everything about you.

If you've decided on the latter course of action, don't expect it always to be easy. There might be a lot of talking to people to get through, a lot of pouring over old family photographs and, almost certainly, a lot of hanging around in cold, draughty corridors not getting anywhere very quickly.

Having said that, bringing the benefits of modern computerisation to bear on a subject that, by its very nature, is so steeped in history might provide the answer. And as we are continually being reminded here on 8000 Plus, no subject seems too traditional for the PCW to tackle.

The strong presence of PCWs throughout organised family history societies would seem to bear ample witness to the fact that the PCW and genealogy make a successful partnership. Let's take a look at the programs available for the PCW-owning family historian and talk to the people who use them.

INDEXER

£20 ● David Computer Software ● 061 4394841

Indexer is not entirely sure what it is. Although it comes from the same stable as Genny (see right) it is not strictly a genealogical program. Rather, it is a database. The first point you should note is that when running Indexer from BASIC, all the files on your M: drive are automatically erased – with no warning. With this in mind it is probably best to run it straight from a start of day disc.

That aside, Indexer is no mean program. It will allow you to make use of both drives if your PCW has that capability and is remarkably flexible for a 25k Mallard BASIC program.

Unlike many other databases for the PCW, the installation process with this program is a piece of cake (or even brioche). There is none of the changing discs left, right and centre, creating index-discs, data-discs or the rest of the rigmarole which normally accompanies such packages. You simply type BASIC at the A> prompt and once in BASIC you RUN "INDEXER.DCS" (make sure to use the .DCS suffix as Mallard won't recognise it as a compatible file otherwise). Once you've done this, you will find yourself facing the main menu.

```
* REVIEW FILE *

F/B scrolls forwards/back, +SHIFT for fast (skips 9/10), or #ref or E to exit

1     SURNAME:              BUREAU
2     FIRST NAME(S):        NATHANIEL ULRICH
3     BORN:                 1864
4     MARRIED:              1885
5     DIED:                 1917
6     SPOUSE:               BERNICE BLANCHEFLOWER
7     CHILDREN(1):          BARRYMORE PHILBERT
8     CHILDREN(2):          OGDEN MARSHALL BRAITHWAITE
9     CHILDREN(3):          HERBERTINA MAUD
10    CHILDREN(4):          ALEXANDRA NATHANIELINA
11    CHILDREN(5):          CUTHBERT NORBERT ALBERT
12    CHILDREN(6):          CHARLTON HURST MOORE PETERS
12    CHILDREN(6):          CHARLTON HURST MOORE PETERS
```

Simple, straight-forward and easy to enter; part of a simple Indexer file

```
* FORMAT PRINTOUT *

Option                                          Current setting

A  Typeface: Pica/Elite/Proportional/Condensed  Pica
B  Upright/Italic                               Upright
C  Standard/Enlarged                           Standard
D  Letter/Draft quality                         Draft
E  Double/Single strike                         Single
F  Standard/Emphasised                          Standard
G  Margin - number of characters                0
H  Lines per inch - 6/8/10/4                    6
I  Paper - Single Sheet/Continuous              Continuous
         - Page length, lines                   70
         - Page end gap, lines                  3

J  Print sample of style selected
K  Exit FORMAT PRINTOUT
```

Indexer's comprehensive Print menu; two typefaces and a whole load of ways to use them

This menu greets you with several options. The first one you will need to use is [N]ew file. The maximum file capacity for Indexer is as follows: 360,000 characters on a machine with 512k of memory, 112,000 on the 8256. You have to make four decisions before actually entering data into your new file. Firstly, what you will call it.

Indexer assumes a filename suffix of .CEN (presumably for Census as the packing proudly proclaims that it is used for the East Sussex Census Indexes (sic)). You are then prompted for a File Title. This can be up to 255 characters in length and acts as a reminder as to just what you have in the file.

Next you are asked for a maximum record length. This can be up to 128 characters in length. Lastly you are given the option of defining tabs. A problem occurs here. Say you've chosen to use six tabs (tab 1 is assumed to be in position 1) and while defining them you make a mistake and get an invalid position ... well, there seems to be no way, other than by re-booting (switching off and on again), to escape from the tab menu.

Family fer-youd

After making these few definitions you are ready to enter the data. This all goes in upper case and is, technically speaking, easy-peasy. Simply type in the details – Name, dates, children, hobbies, in fact anything you desire – save the file and you're ready to make use of the comprehensive sort and print facilities.

One handy feature withing Indexer is its ability to import ASCII files from other software such as LocoScript or Protext. Remember when doing this to save your files with that old .CEN suffix otherwise Indexer will chuck it back at you.

All in all, Indexer is a handy database, if a little overpriced. It's sorting functions are quick and detailed even if the manual is none to keen on telling you how to use them (its slimmer than Christie Brinkley on a four day fast!).

Tim Smith

INDEXER

Pluses

- ▲ Excellent sort and print facilities
- ▲ Easy to use
- ▲ Imports ASCII files

Minuses

- ▼ Erases M: drive without warning
- ▼ Poor manual

EASE OF USE	4/5	DOCUMENTATION	2/5
FEATURES	3/5	PERFORMANCE	3/5

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GENNY AND GENBASE

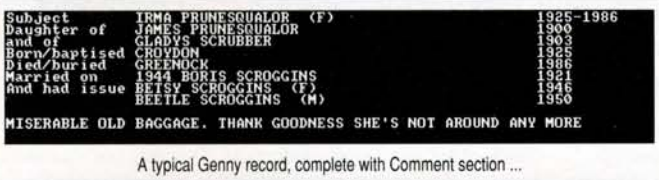
£35 and £25 ● David Computer Software ● 061 439 4841

Genny and Genbase are twin databases that have been written specifically with the dedicated family historian in mind. Where the former specialises in storing details relating solely to people, the latter was written to accomodate the details of specific events. Explains DCS's Edwin Loverseed, 'With the completion of Genny, we reached the machine's capacity. To add any more details would have slowed down the machine intolerably. We decided to split the two databases.'

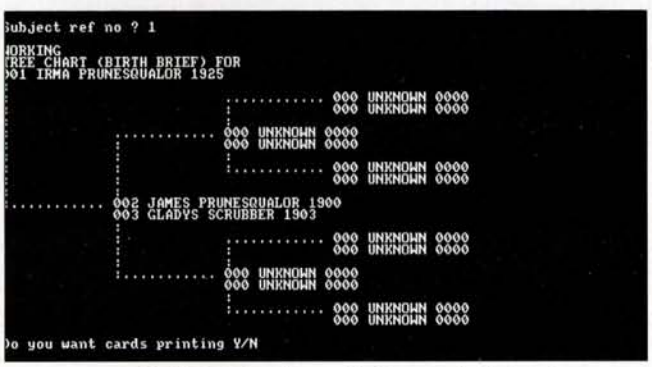
Installing Genny is not the simplest task you will ever be called upon to do and will probably leave the complete PCW novice tearing his or her hair out. The reason for this is that you need to insert your own data disc to replace the master disc on booting up. But the program won't accept any old data disc; it has to be one on which you have already saved Genny files. Now you can't save any Genny files to them until you get into the program – and so it goes on. Your best bet is to go straight to the bottom of page 17 which shows you how to transfer demonstration data from your Genny master disc to the all-essential data disc. The situation then improves dramatically.

Genny allows you to present the same information in a number of different ways. The PCW version allows you to store the genealogical details of up to 500 subjects (or individuals) per disc. Each time that you enter a record subject's name, the program will prompt you to provide the following details – if known: the subject's sex, date and place of birth (or baptism) and death (or burial), all the details imaginable relating to marriage, offspring and parents and so on. There's also a **Comment** section in which you can record supplementary information.

The sub-section Genread allows you, once you've compiled your database, to manipulate the information in a number of different ways. Choose **Display by Name**, for example, and you will be prompted to enter the name, birthdate and sex of a particular individual so that the program can then list to the screen the whole record. The **Browse** facility lets you do just that: leaf through the records sequentially by reference number with the option of calling up all the details if required. Genny will carry out efficient searches on partial entries of subject names, places or anything included in a Comment.



A typical Genny record, complete with Comment section ...



... and Genbrief, which supplies you with a four-generation birth-chart

Out of your tree

Genchart has to be the most enjoyable component of Genny to use, providing you with the tools to literally plot your family's history by means of a series of drop-line charts. You can, for example, ask Genny to do a male or female line trace. Enter the reference number of the target person and the program will happily compute a direct line of descent from the earliest recorded ancestor. A generation chart, on the other hand, will detail the descendants of any subject over a four-generation span in chart form. Four- and five-generation tree-charts are also available.

Genbase is provided free with any PCW purchases of Genny and has been especially designed for keeping genealogical records of people and of events that are not necessarily inter-related. It is of particular value to genealogists carrying out one name studies.

When you enter your data, you are faced with a series of horizontal prompts as follows: **Subject**, **Date**, **Father**, **Mother**, **Spouse**, **Comment**. The Comment option then provides you the means of recording the details of the event relevant to the subject in question – whether a birth, marriage or death.

Depending, of course, on the size of your files, sorting can be rather a lengthy process and, in some instances, can take upto a couple of hours. Our advice would be to sort through your data at the end of each session so as not to lose hours of your PCW's running time.

One of Genbase's most useful facilities include a phonetic search which is particularly valuable when working with parish registers and census returns. A phonetic search will carry out broad searches on names that have similar-sounding spelling variants – Wight and White, for example.

GENNY

EASE OF USE	4/5	DOCUMENTATION	2/5
RANGE OF FEATURES	4/5	PERFORMANCE	4/5

8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT 14/20

GENBASE

EASE OF USE	3/5	DOCUMENTATION	2/5
RANGE OF FEATURES	3/5	PERFORMANCE	3/5

8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT 11/20

Dorothy and Genny travel back to 1599 with the PCW

The second opinion

Not one of the genealogists we spoke to in the course of writing this article woke one morning with a burning desire to probe their pasts. In the case of Dorothy Reid from Bristol, it was four names which had been hastily scribbled on the back of an old bill-head of her father's which did the trick.

'I had no family apart from my 94 year old mother who could remember nothing of value. Not even an aunt who died recently at the age of 99 could shed any more light on the subject. It was,' says Dorothy, 'literally a case of dig, dig, dig.'

Knowing that she was, as she puts it, 'no typist', she decided to buy a word processor to help her in her quest. 'I wanted a machine which would allow me to see my mistakes before committing them to paper.' Following a visit to a Birmingham NEC Computer Exhibition, Dorothea bought her PCW. She then recruited the help of Genny, a program which first came to her notice one evening while attending a Birmingham and Midlands Family History Society get-together. 'I never looked back,' she says.

Dorothy particularly likes Genny's friendly, menu-driven approach to data entry – 'It asks you for everything that it requires,' she says. 'It certainly beats the old-fashioned card-index system that I was using before, with one ancestor to a card!'

What about the program's limitations? 'Well,' she laughs, 'Genny doesn't allow more than 19 children per subject. One entry had 22; I had to store all the surplus offspring in the Comment section of the record!'

Looking back with LocoScript

Genealogy is not always the cosiest of hobbies to pursue, and Philip Jackson from Saltford in Avon would be the first person to agree. 'Sitting inside cold church vestries hour after hour pouring over old parish registers can be a very sobering experience,' he laughs. So what makes him continue with it all? 'The sheer determination of finishing a project,' he replies, 'once you've imposed your own target.'

Missing ancestors

Those of you who remember the review 8000 Plus carried way back in October 1987 of the genealogy program for the PCW called Personal Ancestral File may be wondering why we have not included it in this software round-up. The answer is, we're afraid, quite simple. Much to our surprise – and a good many other people's – Kintech have stopped producing PCW versions of the program. Their reason? 'We have changed our area of operation to concentrate exclusively on IBM-computer case manufacturing,' said proprietor Nigel Crossley.

Genealogists unite

For more information about genealogy in general, contact The Society of Genealogists, 14 Charterhouse Buildings, Goswell Road, London EC1M 7BA (telephone 01 251 8799). In return for paying an annual membership fee of £32.50 (if you live within 25 miles of Trafalgar Square) or £23.50 (if you don't), you have unlimited access to one of the biggest collection of parish registers and the International Genealogical Index Worldwide which has, on index, 85 million baptisms and marriages. As well as laying on regular meetings and lectures, the Society will also be able to provide you with a contact for your local family history society.

It was the birth of his son in 1951 which initially triggered Philip's interest in his family history. And although the interest 'lay fallow', as he puts it, for a considerable period of time – about thirty years – he did manage to secure a lot of information about the past from his immediate relatives.

It was precisely because Philip was able to collate so many details about his ancestors in those early years that he rather eschewed the notion of committing it all to modern computer software at a later date. And although he is the proud owner of a PCW, he admits that he bought it to help him with genealogy in general rather than with his specific family history. 'Having spent so much time compiling manual charts, I just couldn't see the value to be gained from sitting down and typing it all into a computer.'

Little parisher

So why did he buy a PCW in the first place and what exactly does he use it for? Most of the time that he devotes these days to genealogy is taken up with that most valuable source of information, parish registers. Indexing them can be a very protracted, not to mention tedious, affair without the advantage of computerised help. 'I have to confess that I wasn't that impressed with the CPC, but when I first saw the PCW, I knew it was the one.'

Any genealogist will tell you that there always comes a point at which you will have to look at parish registers. Someone, consequently, has to impose some sort of intelligible order on them. Philip realised that putting together alphabetically-sorted indices manually was a complete non-starter. And so, using DCS's Indexer, Philip completed an alphabetic ordering of his antecedents' parish register (Guiseley in Yorkshire) from 1721 to 1780. He is currently bringing to a close an alphabetic indexing of the same register from 1780 to 1812.

'And after that,' adds Philip, 'I intend to work through to 1857, which is when they brought in National Registration.' But if you think this is the work of a few weeks, you would be quite mistaken. 'I've set myself,' says Philip, 'a ten-year project at the end of which I will have arrived at 1857. After that I want to make a start on the non-conformist registers up until 1812. You see, the parish register system did not begin properly until the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, and since the church represented the local government of the day, everything was recorded on them – unless, of course, you were a Quaker or a Jew.'

Initially, Philip took the chronologically-arranged Guisely parish registers from a microfilm kept by the Whitchurch Mormon Church and typed them painstakingly into Indexer. Once the program had carried out an alphabetic sort on the data, it was a simple matter to import it into LocoScript for any further editing. Having re-inserted it back into Indexer, the register had then to be compared with the original Yorkshire register.

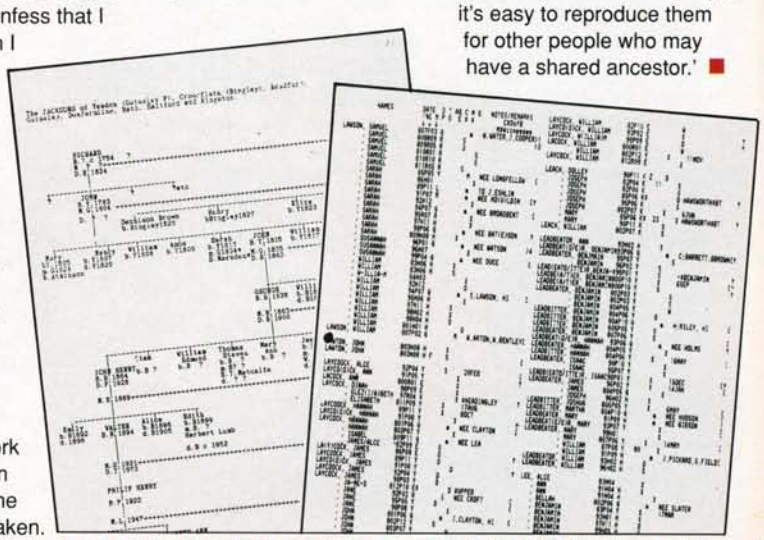
What's in a name?

'Though in theory a copy of the original,' points out Philip, 'there turned out to be an awful lot of differences between the two versions. Put two pieces of paper side by side and invariably you will find yourself faced with two different answers. There proved to be a discrepancy between 29 per cent of the compared entries, four per cent of which were quite serious. By that, we mean completely different names having been entered, not just your usual spelling differences.'

Laborious though it may sound, it is precisely this sort of hard graft that provides fellow family historians with invaluable help in the plotting of their respective family trees. 'It's not just a question of doing it, but controlling it as well. I was even able to help one lady in Canada track down three previously-missing generations,' grins Philip.

Philip also uses a combination of his PCW and LocoScript 1 to produce what he calls indexed drop-line charts of his own family history. As he points out, 'It beats carrying a roll of wall-paper around in my pocket to show my full pedigree. The first page shows the direct male line with arrows pointing to the right indicating the female lines on marriage. By turning the appropriate number of pages – this is indicated by the position the relevant female arrow occupies starting from the top right hand corner of the page – the relevant pedigree can be followed very easily.'

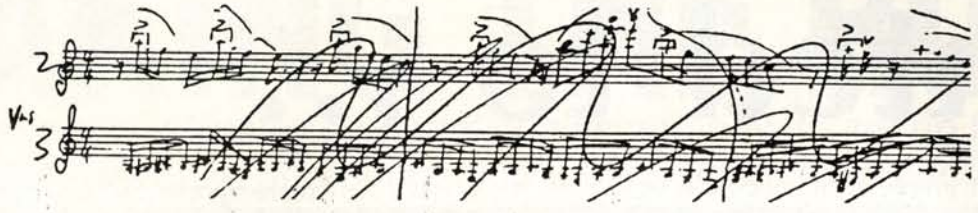
'There's no denying,' says Philip, 'that setting up these charts can be very fiddly, especially where someone has produced a lot of children. But once they have been set up, it's easy to reproduce them for other people who may have a shared ancestor.' ■



Philip's LocoScript-generated drop-line charts. He tends to sketch out a rough tree on paper before beginning; then he sets LocoScript on half-line spacing. Pressing [EXTRA] and the [.] keys simultaneously, meanwhile, produces the drop-line.

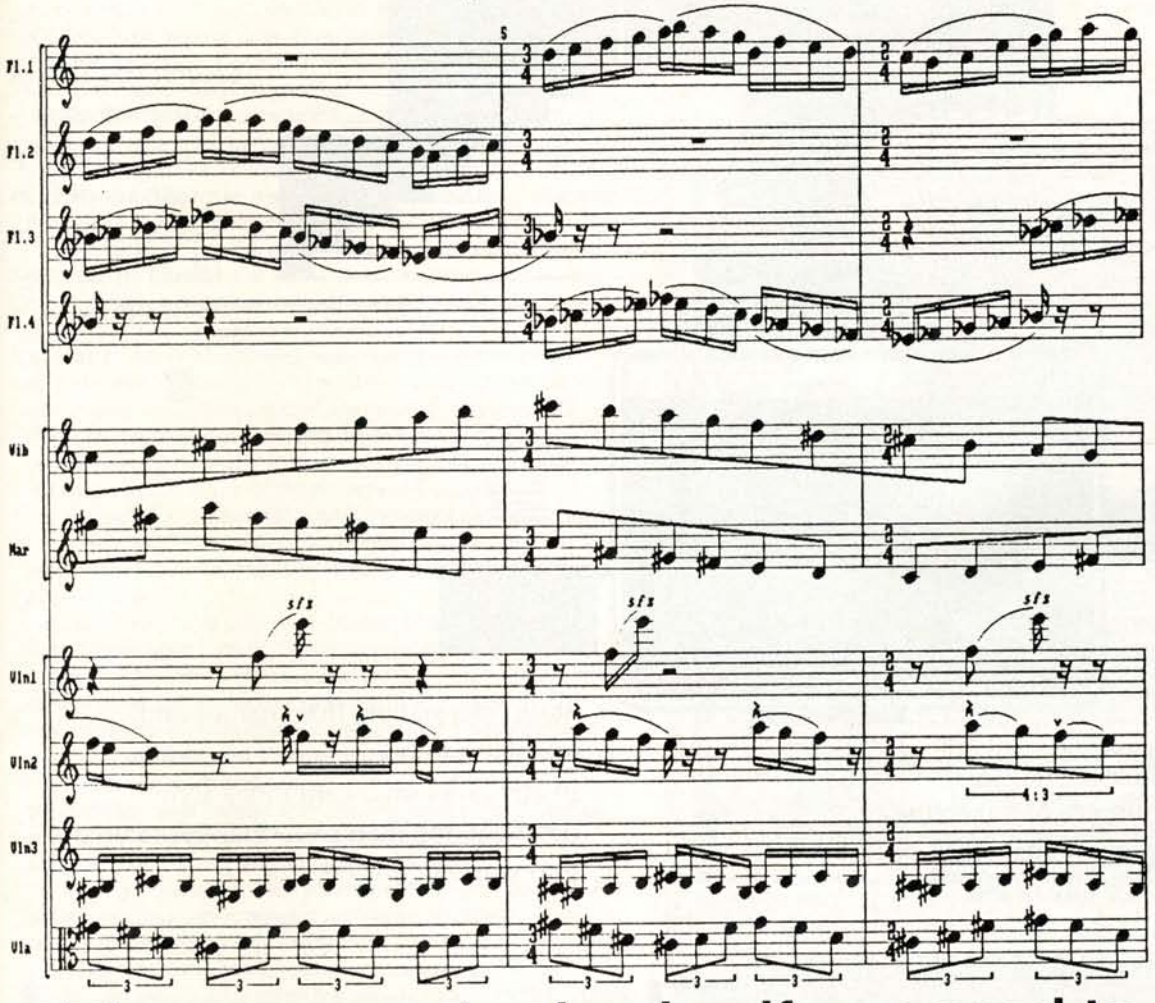
A typical page from Philip's alphabetically-indexed Guiseley parish register. 'The beauty of Indexer is that it manages to compact information so well.' Combine that feature with powerful search and sort facilities and it's a winner for the family historian.

You could choose to write your music using pens, pencils, rulers, rubbers - keeping plenty of Tippex and spare manuscript paper handy,



or you could use

The Composer's Pen



"Is there a kind of wordprocessor for music that lets me type in music, and then print it out? Can I type in any notes I want, as many staves as I need, in any key I wish? Does it print text for musical directions and for song writing? Can I change my mind and correct mistakes? Can I move sections of music around from one instrument to another? Will it print out the full score AND selected staves or parts? Will it transpose for me? Will it vertically align notes on different staves? Even when I use complicated cross rhythms in different parts? Is it easy to use? Will my daughter be able to use it for her music studies? Can I run it on my Amstrad PCW? Does this mean I will never have to pay to get my parts written out again? Are hundreds of composers, arrangers, copyists, choirmasters, bandleaders, teachers, students, music publishers, jazz bands, brass bands and pipe bands, already relying on The Composer's Pen? Does it take the drudgery out of what should be a creative act?

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MAKING THE RULES

Part two of Rob Ainsley's tutorial shows you how to set up formats in your favourite database and brings you a step closer to mastering Masterfile

So you've spent the last month entering all those details into a Masterfile database – in this case a list of your pig breeder club members. You've done the hard work and can now start to enjoy playing around with Masterfile's facilities.

Load your file as usual: run up Masterfile by typing **MF8000** at the A> prompt, press L (for 'Load/Save') when the first menu appears, then change drive if you have an 8512 by pressing [D] then [B]. [L] loads a file; press this and then type **MEMBERS** or whatever name you gave your file.

The main menu returns to the screen; press [D] and the file is displayed, record by record.The first one that shows is the first one alphabetically by surname, assuming you entered **'Name'** initially when setting up the database, and used the > character in the names to tell Masterfile where the surname begins.

The problem with the current way the data is displayed is that you only get one name at a time. In some circumstances, you might require a complete name and address list, which could be printed out and used for reference purposes.

The secret of Masterfile's power lies in its formats. These are your ways of displaying any or all of the items of information in each name and address record, and you can have up to ten. It's rather like designing a form, and deciding what information must be put where; how many lines you want to put for the address, how big a box to leave for the pig breeds and so on.

Examples of the sort of formats you might have are shown in the screen shots on these pages. Each uses the same set of information – your membership details – but displays them in a different way.

Until now you've only used **'Format 0'** (as you'll see from the bottom right hand corner). This is the straightforward 'card index' format that Masterfile starts you up with; one set of details to a screen listed out line by line. Now you'll define additional formats like those above, respectively called **Format 1** and **Format 2.**

Get to the main menu (pressing [X] if necessary) and press [F] for **'format maintenance'**. You want to start a new format, so press [N] for **'new format'** from the next menu. **'Give format reference'** means 'which number format are you defining or about to edit?'; **'1'** is the appropriate response.

The next question, **'Give pixels per line'** is a coded way of asking you how widely spaced you want each line to be on screen (printed spacing is unaffected). If you give 8, or just press [ENTER], your lines have no blank space between them; 15 would give almost a full blank line between each; 12 half a blank line, and so on. Let's say you go for the minimum option and just press [ENTER].

In Xcess

The next screen is a bit confusing the first time. There's a long thin rectangle showing the position where the first record will go, together with the available space for whatever information you want to pull out of each name-and-address record. You will also see a panel telling you how many lines you currently have available for heading text (2), information from each record (1), and also how many name-and-address records will fit onto one screen (26).

All we want for **Format 1** is one name and address to a line, so this setup suits us fine. Press [ENTER] to confirm.

From the next menu we want to insert an element, the first one being the name. So press [I]; you're now asked what sort of thing you want to insert. You want **'record data'** (i.e. information from the name-and-address records) so press [D]. To **'external data?'** reply with [N]; this refers to pulling in information from a different file, and need not be of concern now.

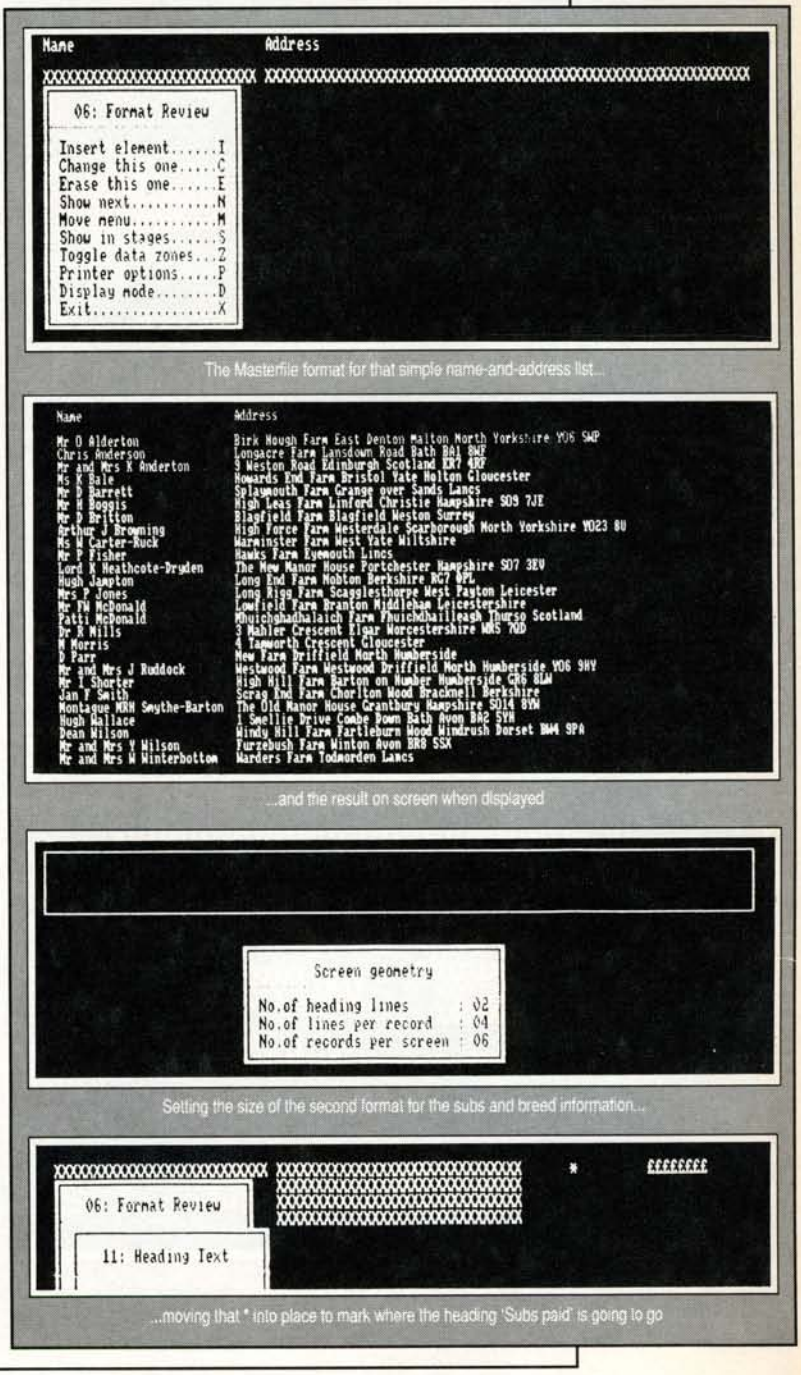
When asked **'Give data number'**, press [1][ENTER] – this is the number associated with the Name, as you can see from the reminder helpfully posted at the top.

You now see a bunch of Xs on the screen and a menu. This will show Masterfile the position and size

Format frets

If Masterfile's menus get in the way when setting up a format, take [M] from the **'Format review'** menu to move them elsewhere on screen.

Don't worry if the boxes of XXXXs you move around appear to wipe out any other boxes on their travels. It does not affect the format.



The Masterfile format for that simple name-and-address list...

...and the result on screen when displayed

Setting the size of the second format for the subs and breed information...

...moving that * into place to mark where the heading 'Subs paid' is going to go

Still to come...

Next month will cover sorting, arranging and selecting records, and finding the one you're looking for in amongst the 2,000 others. It'll also cover printing out.

The month after will deal with the more exotic functions: fancy formats with boxes and panels, exporting and importing data to and from LocoScript, calculations etc.

of the slot that you want the name to take up on the format. Now you have to move the bunch of Xs to the right place, and expand them to the correct size.

Press [M] for **'Move'** and then use the cursors to shuffle the Xs across to the correct slot (or [ALT] plus cursors for big leaps). When it's there, press [ENTER]. Now to expand it; press [P] for **'paragraph size'** and use the cursors to stretch it out lengthways to the right sort of size. [ENTER] when it looks right.

Now you want to insert the address. [X] back to the **'Format review'** menu and press [I] again to insert a new element. Again, choose [D] for **'record data'** and give [N] as it's not external data. Position and size the Xs to show the 'slot' for the address as with the name.

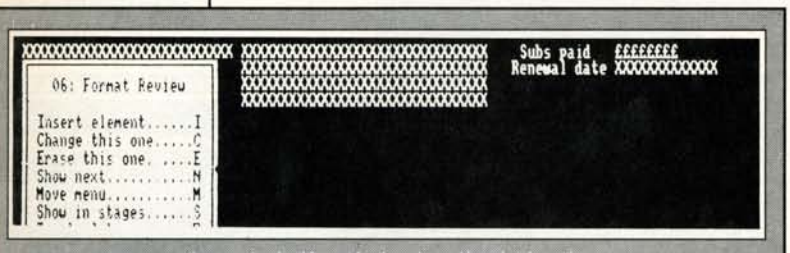
Get ahead

To finish off, you can add some headings. At the **'Format review'** menu take [I] for **'insert element'** but next give [H] for **'Heading text'**; you will see an asterisk instead of a bunch of Xs. This represents the heading. As before, use [M] then the cursors to move it to the right place (i.e. against the left margin) and [ENTER]. Next press [E] for **'Edit'** and type in the text you want as a heading – here, **'Name'.** End with [ENTER] and you see **'Name'** appear on screen. [X] to the **'Format review'** menu and repeat these steps to insert another heading **'Address'** above the address slot.

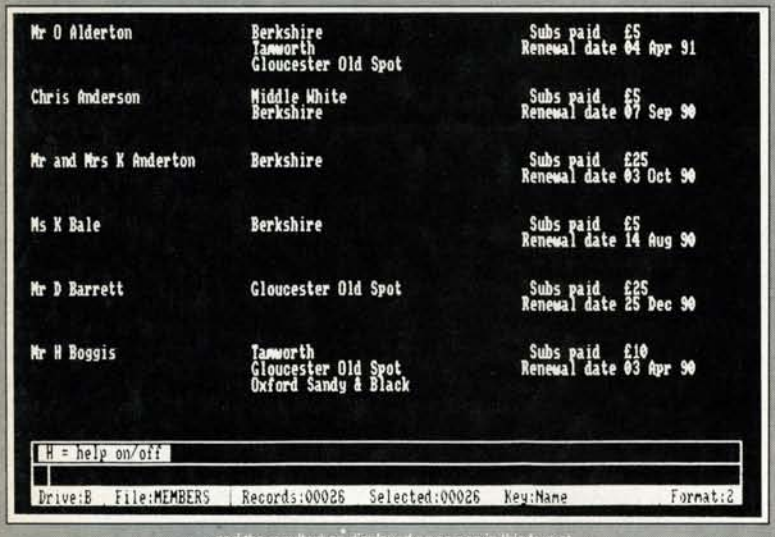
Keep pressing [X] to get back to the main menu, and press [D]. Your information is now displayed in the format you've defined, 26 names and addresses to a screen. If you press [ENTER], you move to the next screen; press [ALT] and the up arrow moves the screen up one name and address, and [B] takes you to the beginning as before. If you want to edit an entry, you can do it using the cursors and the grid key as before.

To see the information displayed in the other format, press [R] (for **'rotate formats'**); you're back to the one name per screen business. At the bottom right you see **'Format 1'** change to **'Format 0'**. Another [R] takes you to the name-and-address listing style of **Format 1**, and so on.

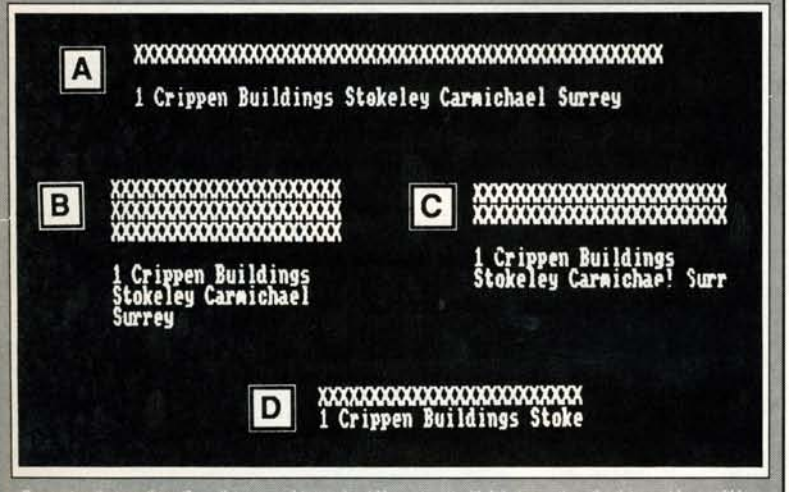
Now to set up that second format. [X] to the main menu and set up a Format 2 as above. This time, at the **'screen geometry'** bit, where you have that rectangle and can set up how much space the information is to take up, make the rectangle rather bigger. You do this by using the cursors: sideways ones to make it deeper or shallower, up and down ones to move the box up or down.



...the more involved format for the subs and breeds information...



...and the result when displayed on screen in this format



Remember that anything like a list or an address should be entered with [_] signs - then the list or address will be displayed nicely in the box. The above sized boxes in a Masterfile format will display a line that was entered as 1 Crippen Buildings[_]Stokeley Carmichael[_]Surrey in the ways shown

Boxing clever

The box to contain each person's details should be approximately four lines deep, with two lines for headings. Use the cursors as indicated to make the box four deep, with two lines for the heading; you're told you will have six records per screen with this setup.

Insert the first element, the name, as before against the left hand edge. Next, you want to set up a slot four deep for the breeds. Insert as before, giving 5 as the element to insert – but this time, when you move it or size it up with [M] or [P], note that you can now use the down cursors as well as the sideways ones. These respectively move the box of Xs up or down or stretch / compress it downwards. Use them to make the box four deep and a sensible width.

Repeat for the other data you want to insert. To get the heading **'Subs'** and **'Renewal',** follow the steps for inserting a heading, but move it into the appropriate place in the first record, by the XXXs you've positioned, rather than putting it at the top. That way it will repeat in each name's entry, instead of appearing at the top only.

If you want to change something – the size of a box for example – then select it ([F] from the main menu, then [V] for **'View/Alter'**) and get to the **'Format review'** menu. Pressing [N] selects each entry in turn – it flashes as you press [N] and the one currently selected is shown at the bottom of the screen. [C] then allows you to change it.

Punctuate to accumulate

A nice touch is to put a £ sign in the **'subs'** entry. Change it by following the above steps and from the **'Record data'** menu select [A] for **'attributes'.** You can now select the following: **'Justification'** (left, right or centred) by pressing [L], [R] or [C]; **'Leading symbol'** (i.e. something like a [£] or [$] sign) – so type [£] then [ENTER].

Two decimal places (i.e. 5.00 instead of 5) – probably looks better without, so enter [N], or else [Y] if you want to display pence too; thousands commas (i.e. 1,000 instead of 1000) – enter [N]; when **'Column total'** is displayed on screen following the last entry, press [Y] and the total number of subs will be totted up for you.

The new formats you've defined are saved when you save the file at the end. ■

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BOOKS

This month 8000 Plus is devoting two of its pages to the best PCW wisdom that money can buy. All of the books pictured here have been reviewed in detail by the magazine at various times in the past – and they all scored at least 4 out of 5 on the 8000 Plus value verdict scoreboard. Beside each bookcover, shown above and right, we've published the book's price and the name of its publishers. We've also indicated the issue- and page-number of the original review.

The subjects under the spotlight are varied and interesting: LocoScript to SuperCalc, business software to hacking. Everything is, as they say, grist to our mill. So if you're in need of any PCW instruction, pull up a comfy chair and start reading!

1 Protext, A PCW User's Guide by Rob Ainsley *(Issue 36, p39)*

If you've only ever used LocoScript, but are no longer entirely happy with it, this one will definitely be worth a read. It is an all-embracing beginner's course in Protext which is intent, among other things, on making the conversion from LocoScript as painless as possible. The book is not just a long catalogue of Protext's many features; instead, Ainsley highlights the destination – printing addresses on envelopes, for example – and shows you how to get there. There is also a very useful hints and tips section at the back. A real winner.

2 Easily into LocoScript by Susan Rogers *(Issue 36, p39)*

This book-cum-training guide is for all those PCW 8000 series machine owners who aren't, as yet, completely au fait with the mysteries of the PCW's native word processor, LocoScript 1. It has been written with the complete novice in mind and, being a self-standing book, is tailor-made for self-study. There are twelve sessions in all, each one covering a different group of functions. Each chapter begins with a list of objectives and finishes with a series of multiple-choice questions just to make sure you've learnt what you should! Supplied with a LocoScript 1 training disc, this book represents excellent value for money.

3 Mallard BASIC Introduction and Reference by Locomotive Software *(Issue 16, p41)*

*This is **the** reference guide to the Mallard BASIC language and as such, is an indispensable item on the bookshelf of any PCW BASIC programmer. Written by the creators of Mallard BASIC, this book caters for the programming needs of 8000 and 9512 owners. The book contains vital sections for the information of both the 'learner' and the more experienced programmer. Detailed chapters on how to make use of Mallard BASIC and the 'Jetsam' file handling system as well as the GSX graphics extension make interesting – and vital – reading if you want to get the most out of the one of the two programming languages which come with your PCW.*

4 Desktop Publishing with the Amstrad PCW by Michael Milan *(Issue 16, p40)*

A machine specific-DTP book; well, well, well. This book contains literally everything you wanted to know about the art of successful desktop publishing, including all the PCW DTP packages available and which word processors work best with what. Milan has also thoughtfully included some more general sections on design and layout; these contain the kind of information that will always stand you in good stead no matter what machine you use. For anyone who is thinking of getting creative, this one's an absolute must.

5 Designs on Your Desktop by Harry Atherton *(Issue 23, p22)*

CAD, or Computer Aided Design, was one of those computerese buzz-phrases of the Eighties. In this book, Harry Atherton guides the unsuspecting computer user, step by step, through the various procedures involved in buying a CAD system, using it and editing your output. He briefly describes the basics of the computer and all the hardware attachments you might expect to come across when looking toward a CAD system. The tone is light and the subject matter informative. The only snag is that the book, not surprisingly, isn't PCW-specific. A good read nonetheless.

6 Program Your PCW! by Ian Sinclair *(Issue 4, p50)*

More printed advice for the Mallard BASIC programmer. This excellent book is aimed at the absolute beginner, providing, as soon as possible, hands-on experience in the form of short BASIC type-ins that actually 'do' something. Sinclair covers everything you're likely to want to know about: displaying messages on the screen, data statements, formula and functions, loops and string-handling; it's all here for the learning. Stick with it, the joys of Jetsam are waiting to be discovered.

7 The SuperCalc Super Book by Elizabeth H Lee *(Issue 28, p45)*

SuperCalc 2 is the only SuperCalc version that is fully operational on the PCW. The SuperCalc Super Book was written to show you how to get the best out of the entire SuperCalc family of spreadsheets (SuperCalc 2, 3 and 4). Consequently, the PCW user likely to get the most out of this book probably has access to bigger machines which are making use of the suite's more sophisticated features. Clear illustrations and amusing cartoons add the finishing touches to this highly informative read.

8 All in One Business Computing: Amstrad PCW and Mini Office Professional by John M Hughes *(Issue 24, p22)*

This has replaced the accompanying manual as the definitive guide to Mini Office Professional. Hughes' lucid step by step approach makes a refreshing change as he encourages the user to gain hands-on experience as soon as possible.

The example walk-throughs which the author uses to penetrate the various modules concerned are easy to follow and highly workable. You won't be left wanting with this book.

9 15-Hour Word Processing Using the Amstrad Word Processor by Anna Ruthven *(Issue 41, p51)*

This is another crash course in LocoScript 1 which doesn't assume any prior knowledge or experience in its reader. It's an easy to follow, practical guide which explores the most useful features of the 8000 series machines when used in conjunction with the native word processor. More step by step instructions and exercises lead to direct hands-on experience as you gradually work your way through the Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced Sections of the book; it's the only way to learn.

10 Looking into LocoScript 2 for the Amstrad PCW 9512, PCW 8256 and PCW 8512 by Susan Rogers *(Issue 26, p45)*

Another welcome offering from the Rogers' stable which has, by now, perfected the art of software training whether in book or personal form. This time, though, the emphasis is very definitely on LocoScript 1's successor. The book consists of 15 assignments altogether; in true Rogers ' style, each one begins with a number of objectives (it always helps to know where you're headed); after that, it is just a matter of working your way through the instructions. One of the best things about this book is that Susan Rogers has devoted the last three chapters to the Loco addons LocoSpell and LocoMail and the various applications for which they can be used. A vital buy for the dedicated LocoScript 1 user who is definitely on the up and upgrade.

11 Choosing and Using CP/M Business Software on Amstrad Computers by PK McBride *(Issue 12, p35)*

Following the success of the PCW machines, a large amount of CP/M software was made available for the range. This book looks at the wide spectrum of CP/M-based business applications and helps you, not only choose the right software for the job in question , but get the most out of it as well. The book provides a wide range of general evaluation criteria for assessing business software packages and illustrates how the criteria can be applied in choosing the right package for a particular application. An absolute must for the small business .

12 Computers – Who Needs Them? by D Charlton, S Kosminsky and M Lunnon *(Issue 27, p39)*

Another book which was written to help anybody about to make important decisions concerning introducing and implementing new technology into the working environment. It successfully decodes most of the jargon that inevitably surrounds the introduction of office automation and looks at exactly what you want to do as well as how much money you have at your disposal to do it. A useful, needs-driven book for anyone considering taking this costly plunge.

13 The Z80 Pocketbook by JB Vonk *(Issue 2,p32)*

A technical little number this one; we're afraid that it really only makes recommended reading for those of you who are truly interested in the guts and gore of your machines. There are plenty of tables and diagrams which will present budding technophiles with all the information they're ever likely to need on their Z80 microprocessor in a very clear and lucid fashion. This book represents a convenient and portable source of information for Z80 assembly-language and machine-code programmers alike.

14 Hackers Handbook III by Hugo Cornwall *(Issue 25, p41)*

Ideal for the comms enthusiast and the serious hacker. It provides sound advice on the kind of equipment you will need before you start and reveals sources of information to tap when you do get going. Not surprisingly, staying on the lawful side of entry validation procedures (passwords to you and me) is of paramount importance; Cornwall consequently spends quite a lot of time encouraging you to get into the habit of asking the right sort of questions on approaching any unfamiliar system. An entertaining read for anyone in the comms world.

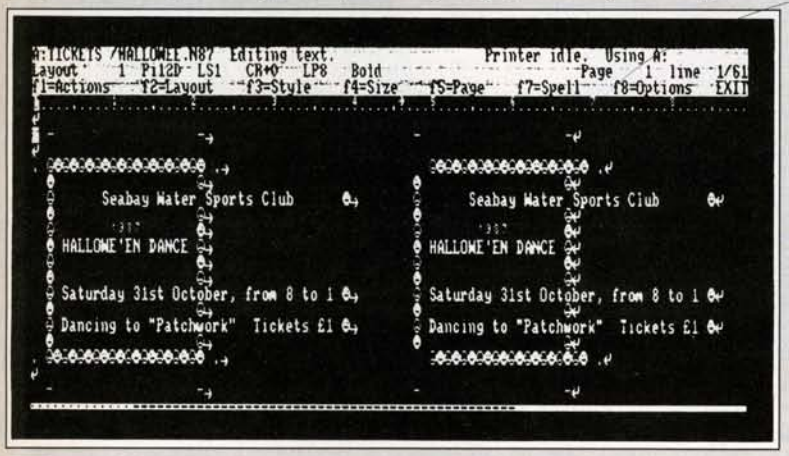
15 Computer Hobbyists' Handbook by RA and JW Penfold (Issue 34, p57)

This is the sort of book which quickly makes itself indispensable once it has been introduced to that gap in the desktop clutter which looks suspiciously like your desktop. It contains, all those lucrative facts and figures which are usually sprinkled rather inconveniently across a wide range of suitably esoteric publications. Although not PCW-specific, the book is well-illustrated and the subject matter wide-ranging. It's a bargain!

JUST THE TICKET

Keith Gibson shows you how to use LocoScript 2 to produce tickets for your next club or office dance

1 Using the wide range of characters, devise a suitable format. To produce the black smiling face in the border, I entered Symbol mode (press [ALT] and [f7] together), then [SHIFT] and [/] together. Just press [/] to produce the white face. The musical notes (on surrounding tickets) = Symbol mode + [SHIFT]/[1/2]. The heart = Symbol mode + [.].



2 I used double-width for the main line. Because the double-width characters are not shown as such on the screen, it all looks rather strange until printed

3 Here we have the style codes. The line pitch is set at 8 (+LP8) instead of the normal LP6; this means that the border units are equally spaced horizontally and vertically

The PCW has been phenomenally useful to me as secretary of a local sports club, but it wasn't until I had some spare time that I applied it to the task of producing dance tickets. At the office, I have access to graphics materials such as Letraset, together with printing and photocopying facilities. I have always used these for posters, tickets, programmes and such like. But not any more.

The task was to produce 100 tickets for a Hallowe'en dance. Using the wide range of characters available in LocoScript 2, a suitable format was devised (screenshot 1), and printed to check that everything aligned correctly. For the first time I tried out some of the more exotic characters that the program offers – particularly for the border. Symbol mode ([ALT] + f7) plus [/] with and without the shift produces, respectively, the black and white masks. I used double-width for the main line. Because the double-width characters are not shown as such on the screen, (screenshot 2), it all looks rather strange until printed, but the screen-dump that includes the codes (screenshot 3) should explain the method.

Note also that the line pitch is set at 8 (+LP8) instead of the normal LP6, so that the border units are equally spaced horizontally and vertically.

More paste, more speed...

Having produced the perfect ticket – and this can only be checked properly by a trial print – the next task is to fill the whole page with the same design. In the size shown, it is possible to get ten tickets nicely onto an A4 sheet.

The ticket alongside the first is probably the most difficult to get into place. Setting up a [TAB] at a suitable position, I used the [COPY] and [PASTE] functions a line at a time, and again tested the result with a draft print. When completely satisfied, the pair of tickets were duplicated a further four times by pasting this block down the page.

Before doing so, try to work in the trim marks between and around the tickets as guides to chopping up the sheet into individual units when printed. Most of the trim marks can be included in the format of the first ticket, and duplicated at the same time as the ticket itself, but others may have to be inserted in the final polishing up. The finished result, printed in draft form, is shown in screenshot 4.

Exchange and mark

Now comes the clever bit – thanks to the versatility of LocoScript. When the next event came along, I realised there was no need to laboriously re-type and re-format everything; there was a much simpler way of doing it – the use of the **Exchange** facility.

Even the borders can be changed by this method, automatically. Calling up the [EXCH] menu, insert in the **Find** panel the character you want to discard. Move to the Exch line and type in the new border character (see page 264 of the LocoScript 2 User Guide for most of the charcters shown in the examples), then enter the Automatic exchange option. Press [ENTER] and prepare to be amazed as a miraculous transformation takes place!

Using the same method, exchange new details for old, a line at a time. If your new line is shorter than the one it is

replacing, compare their relative lengths while they are one above the other in the [EXCH] menu, and insert an extra space at each end so that the new line is centred when inserted in the ticket. Conversely, if the new matter is longer than the original line, include all the spaces that occur at either end of the text when you type it into the **Find** panel, so that the new text exactly fits the space available – difficult to explain here, but easy in practice.

Now you see why it is well worth while taking the trouble in the first place to achieve a perfect 'paste-up' of the total page, including the trim marks: the format is going to be used time and time again, so a little extra care at first will pay dividends.

Quality control

As regards printing, either high quality or draft quality can be used. Use the former if you have plenty of time (each sheet takes about eight minutes to print out) or if you are going to get your master photocopied or litho-printed. Draft quality is perfectly satisfactory as long as your ribbon isn't too ancient or the paper too dark a colour, and a sheet takes less than three minutes to print. I found the maximum weight of paper that the printer could handle was about 135gms, but this is quite heavy enough for a small ticket. If you have access to a guillotine, use it to cut up the individual tickets – even a craft knife and steel rule give a much better trim than scissors can.

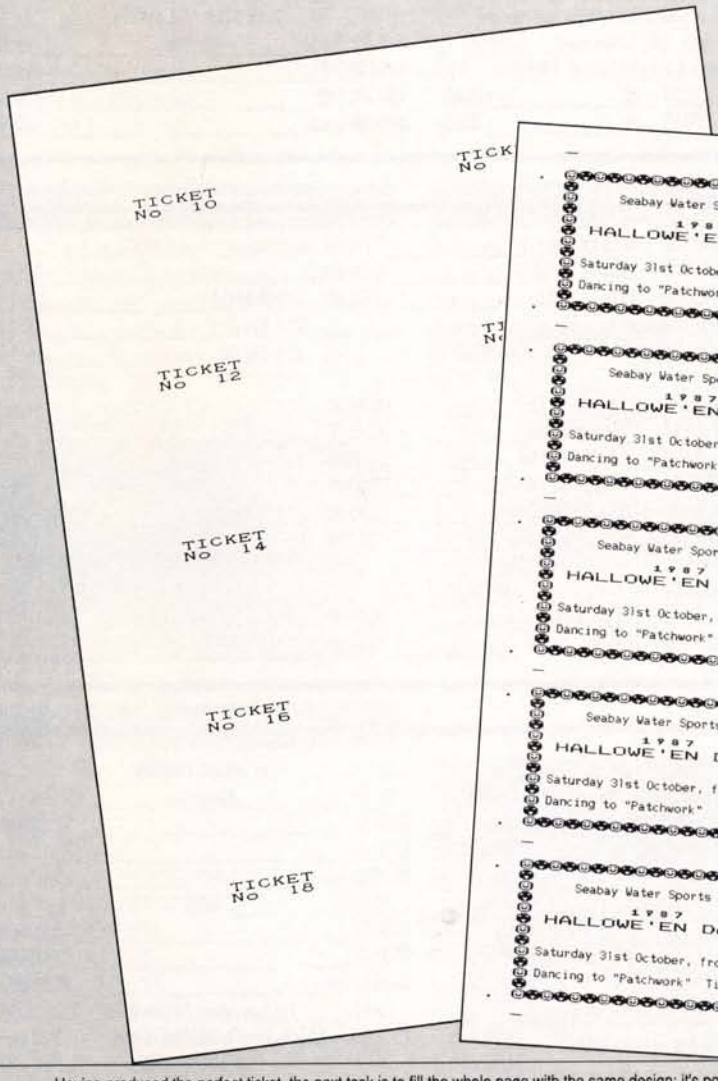
For the finishing touch, your tickets can easily be numbered on the reverse. Set up the numbers '00' to '09' at the same spacing as the ticket grid, aiming to print somewhere near the centre of the reverse of each ticket. A simple way is to make a copy of the ticket itself, using [EXCH] to substitute spaces for everything except the title line, which will be replaced by the number alone, or elaborated by using something like picture 5 – you might as well use LocoScript's offerings to the full!

If you are going to be producing tickets on a regular basis, for 100 tickets you can set up ten pages containing numbers '01' to '100'. Make a copy of your first page, then use [EXCH] to change the first zeros to 1's and then 2's and so on; however, if you think about it, one number will have to be changed manually on each sheet.

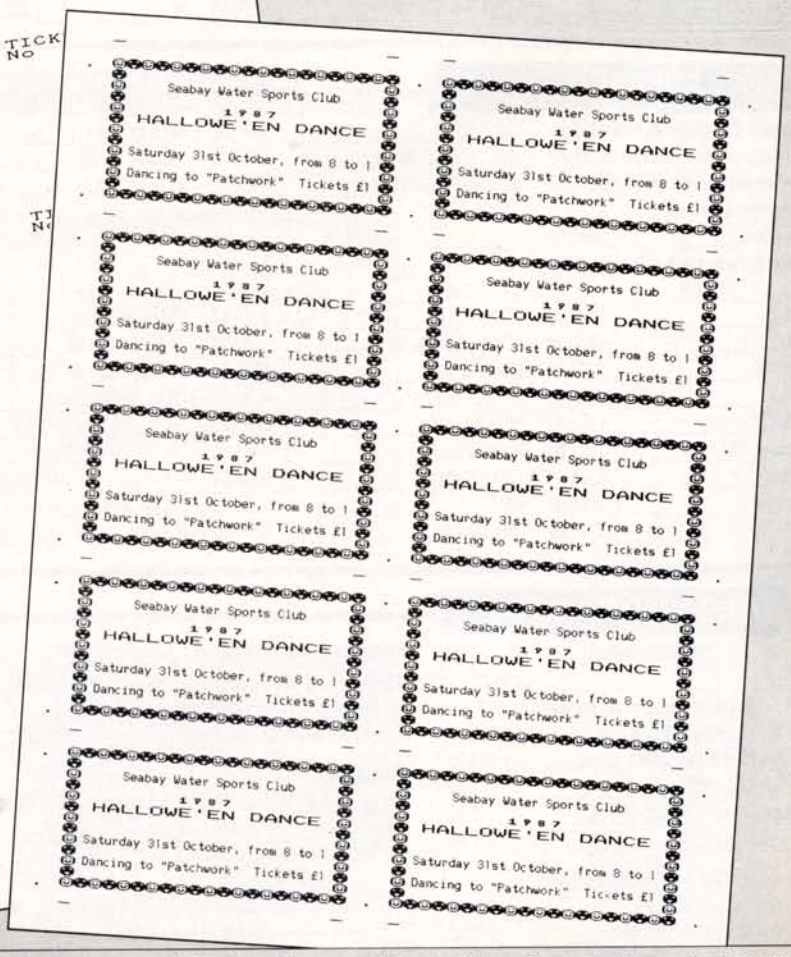
Alternatively, changing the numbers for each page using [EXCH] is so easy that the re-numbering can be done as the sheets are being printed. But remember to edit manually the one number on each page that has both digits the same – the multiples of eleven - 22, 33 and so on.

I am constantly amazed by LocoScript's ability to solve what at first seems a difficult and time-consuming task. I had hardly used the Exchange facility until now, or exploited the exotic end of the character set. So, with all this in mind, it is certainly worth familiarising yourself with a working knowledge of as much as possible of LocoScript 2's many different features. ■

4



5



Having produced the perfect ticket, the next task is to fill the whole page with the same design; it's possible to get ten tickets on an A4 page. Then number them - on the reverse side!

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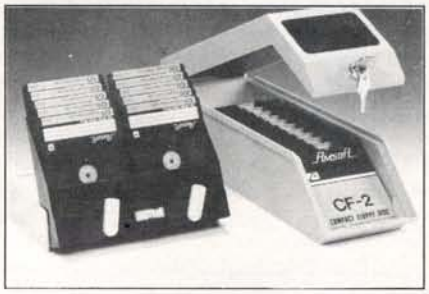

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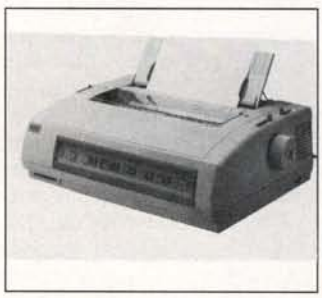

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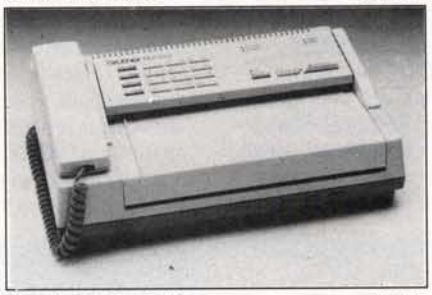

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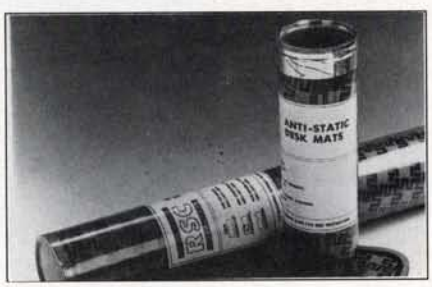

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BACK TO BASIC

"A programmer? Me? No chance!" Geoffrey Childs allays your fears and tries to persuade you otherwise

"Find ten good points about BASIC," was the Editor's brief. Simple, but which ten out of many should I mention? It is easier to write about ten 'bad' points – or rather, features of BASIC that some people believe to be bad. So, as devil's advocate, I shall answer the ten most common adverse comments I hear about BASIC for the PCW. I may convert the dubious and, at the same time, give ammunition to those who are already converts!

Q: I bought my PCW as a word processor, not to do programming. Why should I learn BASIC?

A: I bought my car to travel from A to B, but I find it comes in very useful as a filing cabinet! Uncle Jim bought his microwave to cook soup, but he has now learned how to cook baked beans too. You're the lucky one – you have bought a word processor, and most PCW owners think this alone is good value for their money. As well as this, you have a computer that can be used for other purposes – and it's not as expensive as other less versatile models. No, you don't have to learn to program, but surely it is worth considering when you will not have any substantial initial outlay.

Q: I wouldn't know how to start.

A: Easy, switch the computer on! Seriously, it isn't difficult to do something in BASIC – commanding your computer to be your slave. Of course, it is more difficult to make your slave do something really useful! You've switched on. Put your CP/M disc in the A drive, press space, and wait for the A> prompt. Type in BASIC and press [RETURN] . Soon you get an Ok message which tells you that all is prepared for you to start. Type in **PRINT "I AM A GOOD SPEELER"** or anything else you like, press [RETURN], and see what happens. Now try, **PRINT 2+2**, press [RETURN], and if you were educated at Dotheboys Hall, you will probably have learned one of the facts of life! People have been known to catch the computing bug by doing this, or less. Maybe the next step is to try typing in a short program from a magazine, or to read an elementary series on programming. More on this in a moment.

Q: I'm not the sort of person who would be successful at programming.

A: You don't know, do you? And if you don't try you never will know. I used to have the same feelings about skiing. I remember emerging upside down from a snowdrift, only to hear a stentorian German voice from the valley below: "Father Christmas! Stay there. I am coming up to photograph you." And then there was the incident of the ski-lift and the skis that got away.... At least, if you program, you can make your mistakes in private (unlike skiing) – it is better to have tried and lost than never to have tried at all.

Q: There isn't a manual about BASIC. Why not?

A: There used to be one when the PCW was first marketed, but it is now sold separately by Locomotive. Whether this manual is the most suitable way to start BASIC is open to question. You may find it easier to buy a paper back such as *BASIC in 30 Hours*, which is a tutorial on BASIC on any computer. Mallard BASIC on the PCW won't be exactly the same as, say, Commodore 64 BASIC, but there will be common ground for most of the simple commands you will use. Ian Sinclair's book for the PCW (*Program Your PCW!*) is well liked. You may find some special offers of these books in 8000 Plus. By the time this article is published, we also hope to have a series of tutorial material at PCW World.

Q: I would like a program to classify my pet hippos, but wouldn't it be more cost effective to buy a commercial program than to write one?

A: Maybe. A commercial program will probably be much more skilfully written than anything you write yourself. However, you are likely to find that it has been made to cater for giraffe owners or beetle collectors. There may, on the other hand, be special features (such as classification by thickness of skin) that you want, which are not available from the commercial program. So there are advantages in a personalised program.

Cost effective? Consider this parallel. Is it worth buying a patch of garden, spending hours digging, weeding, planting and watering just to have half a dozen meals of fresh peas in June or July? Your peas will taste better to you than any you could buy in the shop, not necessarily because they are any better, but because they are the result of the efforts you have enjoyed. Same with your hippo program!

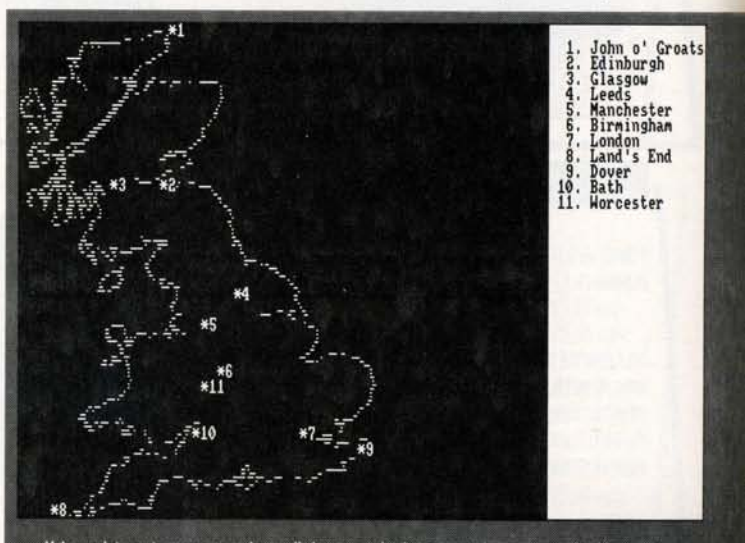
Q: They say Mallard is a difficult version of BASIC. Is it?

A: In the long run, no. However, it does have an unattractive feature that is unhelpful to beginners. Most BASICs will have commands like **CLS** to clear the screen, and similar commands for other elementary procedures. Mallard does this by 'escape codes'. You have to use:

PRINT CHR$(27)"E"CHR$(27)"H"

to clear the screen, for example. Horrid, but let me tell you how to cheat. There's a good chance that in this magazine there will be a program with a lot of these escape codes written into the first few lines. Find how they are used, copy them, save them, and you can then start with this base for your own masterpieces.

Personally, I usually avoid this problem by using or incorporating DWBAS into a program, a small extension that is available with my book, Streamlined BASIC. As you can see from the third screen shot, it will also allow you to access high resolution graphics – although there are some faster and more sophisticated add-on programs that you can buy, if



Using an interpreter, you can make small changes and enhancements to a program after it's up and running. This shows a change made to last year's Britmap when I acquired a file to draw maps

graphics are your interest.

For experienced programmers, escape codes become less of an irritation, and occasionally a benefit. Mallard has a wide range of features, particularly with file handling, and generally I would classify it as a dialect of BASIC which is both powerful and flexible.

Q: They say Mallard is only an 'interpreter', and good programmers use compiled programs. What do they mean, and are they right?

A: There are two ways in which a programming language can operate. In a compiler, the programmer writes what is called 'source code', which bears some resemblance to spoken English. This code is then translated into mumbo jumbo that the computer can understand, and this 'object code' is what will actually operate when the program is run.

An interpreter works with only one program, and does the translation while it runs. The main advantage of a compiler is that the program will rip along at a greater rate of knots. It is also said that because compilers are extremely fussy, and mistakes are time consuming to correct, the programmer will learn greater self-discipline, producing well structured programs. There is nothing to stop you learning a compiled language as well as BASIC, and making up your own mind about this. But it is true on the whole that most beginners prefer to start with BASIC, because it is more forgiving if mistakes are made! As a matter of fact, there are BASIC compilers available for the PCW (at a price), but Mallard and most other implementations of BASIC are interpreters.

Here are two reasons why I prefer interpreters to compilers. Firstly, not only is it easier to correct mistakes with an interpreter, but it is also much easier to make small changes and enhancements to a program after it is up and running. The first screen shot shows such an amendment that was easily made to our series program from last year, Britmap, when I acquired a file to draw maps.

The second point is rarely mentioned – but no less valid or important. With an interpreted language it is possible to use the computer in what is called 'direct mode' as a calculator or, better still, as a programmable calculator. The second screen shot shows that quite complicated activities can be carried out, without actually writing what would normally be called a file or a program. It shows a simple print out, a calculation, a more complex printing manoeuvre, an example of most of the available characters and lastly a little machine code routine to print out the CP/M copyright message.

Q: Isn't BASIC a very slow language?

A: On its own, it may be too slow for some applications such as a very complex calculation, an arcade game or a chess program. But most programs that run on the PCW will have the main delays caused by access to the printer or discs. It will make very little difference to these delays if you use any another language. Indeed, you may often find Mallard BASIC is actually faster, as it is an implementation designed to act with the PCW environment in the optimum way. Other languages may be written in a more general way to interact with any CP/M computer.

Mallard is actually a very fast interpreter, although I would concede that most tests would prove most compilers to be faster. However, it is possible for an experienced programmer to speed up slow sections of a program by using some machine code within BASIC, and Mallard BASIC responds very comfortably to this. It is also true that slow programs are often written by a bad programmer, and would be slow if written in any language by the same programmer!

Q: Don't you have to have a degree in Maths or Computing to be a programmer?

A: No. When I was teaching, I found that given a reasonably intelligent class of 12-14 year olds, they could all manage to construct some sort of a program. The amount of help needed, and the quality of the end result differed – but, at that age they're not frightened of computers, or of making mistakes. At the same time, it is probably a fallacy to believe that an eight year old may be a programmer of Turing-like abilities – despite what their parents tells you!

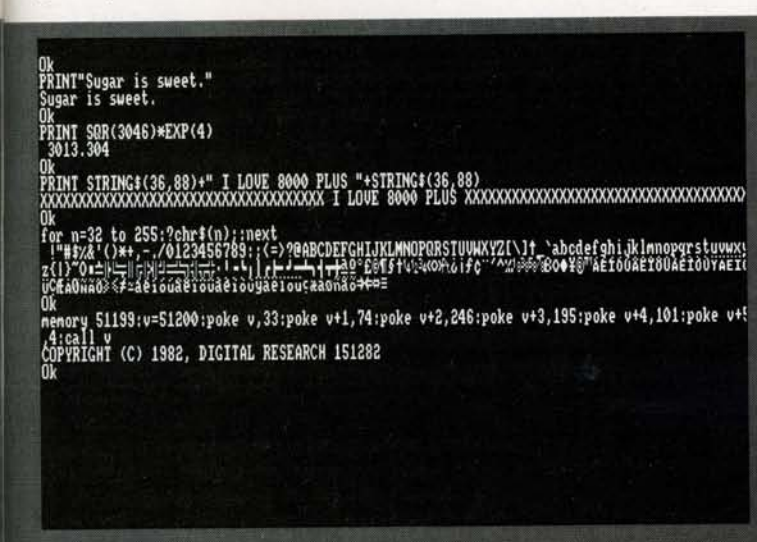
Q: Programmers have beards, speak a funny language, and cannot get any fun out of the hours they spend slaving over their hot computers.

A: Being bearded myself, you find me guilty on the first count, but beards are optional - especially for the ladies. I am sometimes guilty on the second count, but this is something that is not entirely avoidable. Whether your hobby is fishing, polo, archaeology or Mah-Jong, you will use words with your fellow addicts that I wouldn't understand. It will be the same with computer terms. The computer bore is the person who uses this jargon when talking to people without any interest or knowledge of what they mean.

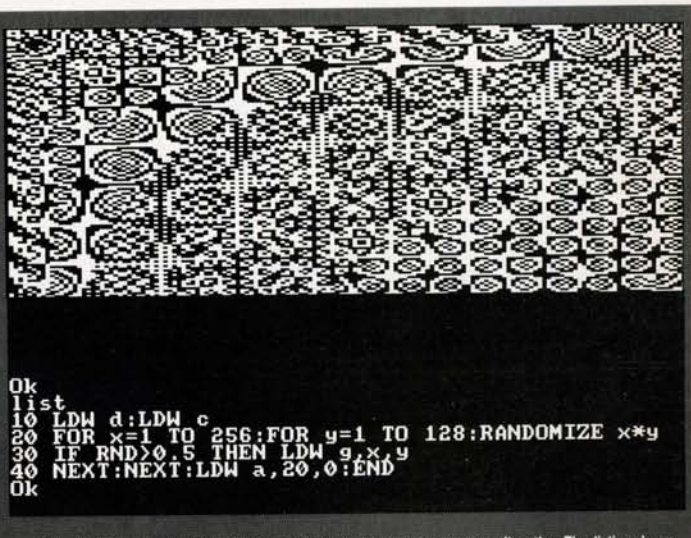
No fun? Perhaps satisfaction is a better word than fun, but sometimes I do think that computers have a sense of humour. My first computer nearly always made a very rude noise just before it crashed into limbo. I can remember watching the PCW rambling on for about five minutes producing screen after screen of absolute rubbish which I watched with whimsical fascination. It then came to an abrupt halt and commented:

Syntax Error in 36.

There is also the pleasure that stems from an intellectual curiosity. Look at the program in the third screen shot. It was written more or less by accident when I was investigating something else. You would expect a chaotic picture, yet there is a pattern – one might call it a nature pattern, like a snowflake or a fingerprint – non-symmetrical, but some order in the chaos! (The unfamiliar commands are DWBAS, g for a 360*256 resolution plot, a for print at, c clear screen, disable cursor). A simple program with a complex result. Fun? Yes! ■



This might look confusing but in fact it shows the advanatages of a compiler over an interpreter. All the actions you see here can be typed straight in giving you a calculator and a screen display, among other functions



This pattern emerged by mistake while trying to produce another program altogether. The listing shown below uses commands from DWBAS, another of my own works

GOBLIN WONDER

At long last there is an adventure game for beginners. Does this mean that it is too simple or is it just right? Tim Smith explores

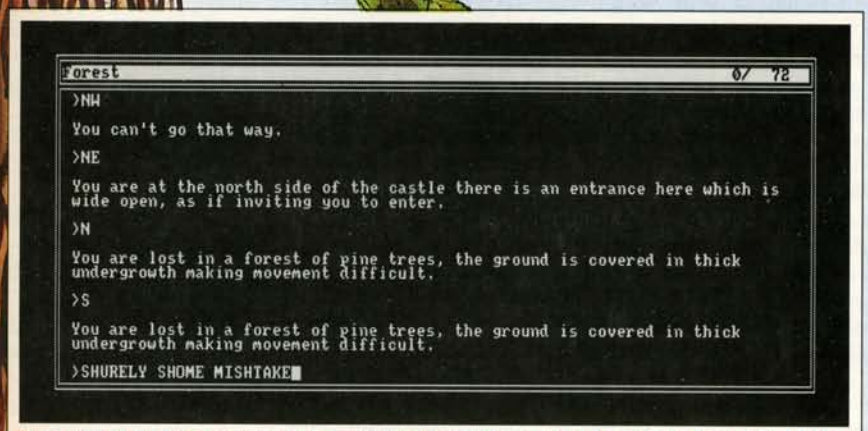
GOBLIN TOWERS

£14.95 ● Classic Quests/Audiogenic ● 01 861 1166

There's this treasure and there's this monster, right? You have to get the former from the latter. Unabashed by the thought of an untimely death, but full of gallant, chivalrous dreams (and possibly over-flowing with avarice) you set off to do battle. It should be held in mind here that so did several hundred other adventurers and none have as yet returned.

This text-only adventure from Classic Quests is the first, and most simple, in a series of five. The plot is fairly routine; you are a brave warrior who seeks to retrieve treasure from a castle which is infested with small, anti-social goblins. There is a maze, a forest, a cottage, some passages, a metal grating and trouble around every bend.

Classic Quests have no qualms about admitting that this is very much a game for beginners to adventuring. Everything is kept simple, except for the forest which seems to change in proportion as well as orientation and location – or maybe that was just bad mapping on our part! For the veteran of such games as Knightorc or the Guild of Thieves (to name but two) this game would hold little challenge. Its worth is really only shown to those people who bought the other two games only to give up in utter disgust when the apple kept exploding in the garden or – more likely – that they couldn't even manage to see in the dark.



This is either the forest of Dunsinane or some seriously strange mapping going on within the program. Come to think of it, the game may well have been based on every one-way system built since 1958 ... so maybe it's not that weird??

Absolute beginners

You start your quest from a small cottage on the borders of the rather mobile forest. For those virgin to this kind of thing, there are a number of ground rules to which you should adhere in Goblin Towers. Firstly, examine everything; the programmers have helpfully re-defined the function ([f1], [f2], and so on) keys to provide oft used commands, so examining, picking up and dropping things need never wear out your fingertips.

Secondly, if the articles you have examined don't bite, kill, move or in any way threaten, then 'Take' them ... they might be useful or they might even be treasure. Thirdly, take no notice of the directions you are given by the program. You can travel quite happily East and find yourself in impenetrable forest, but try going West to backtrack and the path you were on might have mysteriously disappeared.

This appears to be a problem with the two Classic Quest games reviewed over these pages. For those of you who bother to make maps, this spacial contortion act makes life rather difficult. On the other hand, if you play by ear or follow your nose (by putting your foot down with a firm hand and not taking any lip while shooting from the hip ... enough anatomy for now ...) then it could jazz up the proceedings somewhat.

Parse the dutchie

Adventure games are reliant on parsers. These are basically the sections of the program which allow player to communicate with computer and give the illusion that the converse is also happening. An easy game can be made incredibly difficult by a bad parser. In the case of Goblin Towers, the parsing is irritating – verging on the obscure.

For example, you might be told that you are surrounded by trees, so you decide to examine them in the hope of finding a branch to hit someone with. The chances are that you will be informed that the computer has never heard of the word 'tree' and, what's more, you can't even hit – you have to 'mug' or 'break'. Of course there is great fun to be had in discovering the words you are allowed to use but a few obvious ones such as 'hit' could have been included.

The puzzles, on the other hand, are rather intriguing. You can get into the castle with little or no trouble after finding your way around the forest. Getting to the main tower, however, is another matter entirely. Because the number of words held in the vocabulary of the game's parser is so limited, your actions are limited. In theory this should aid the newcomer who will be unable to confuse themselves by following up red herrings. In fact, the courses of action open to you are few and far between and once inside the castle, death comes easy. So remember to save your position as often as you can.

Here's a final tip for the game itself. If someone with a height deficiency, a large weapon and foul breath has a go at you ... don't bother complaining or coming over all macho (or Femcho, if there is a female equivalent!) just think it over. ■

IN A NUTSHELL

A game for beginners to adventuring. Limited parser gives strictly controlled action. A few good puzzles are marred slightly by the eccentric mapping. Quite a slow starter but reasonable for those of you who gave up on the HitchHiker's Guide after the tractor.

GOBLIN TOWERS			
ATMOSPHERE	3/5	CHALLENGE	2/5
ADDICTIVENESS		3/5	
8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT		8/15	

TREE'S COMPANY

If you go down to the woods today, you're sure of a few big surprises. Get lost with this second Classic Quest

FORESTLAND
£14.95 ● Classic Quests/Audiogenic
● 01 861 1166

Are you dreaming or are you awake? Is it a nightmare on elm, oak or maple street? Forestland, another Classic Quests adventure sees you living a recurring dream in which you have to find your way home from a wicked wood. The questions you have to ask yourself here are, how did you get from your bed to the forest? Why are you in the forest and how in tarnation do you get back to your quilt and pillows?

Leafing party

As with the other games in the Classic Quests series, this one lacks any graphics and is played on an inverted screen – black on green. The company tell us that Forestland is rated as 'fairly difficult' and that is just about right.

The first point of any interest you stumble upon is a tree with a small, well crafted dwarfish door (they don't make small, well crafted dwarfish doors like they used to). Now, you know that you should go in but as usual in this kind of fantasy situation, you have no key ... as yet. What you should have is a torch, but no way to light it. You get the picture.

This forest has no intention of letting you leave, and it will give you very little navigation help. You begin with nothing, not even a stitch to wear, or so it seems, and from there on in it is down to your ingenuity to solve the many puzzles which will befuddle you.

Call of the wild

The mapping in Forestland would appear to be a tad contrary. Unless there are a great number of space/time warps, circular paths and general weirdness (which there probably are) there is something radically wrong with the forest. The best thing to do here is get yourself some squared paper, a good strong pen and some patience pills. Getting lost is a way of life in this dingly-dell.

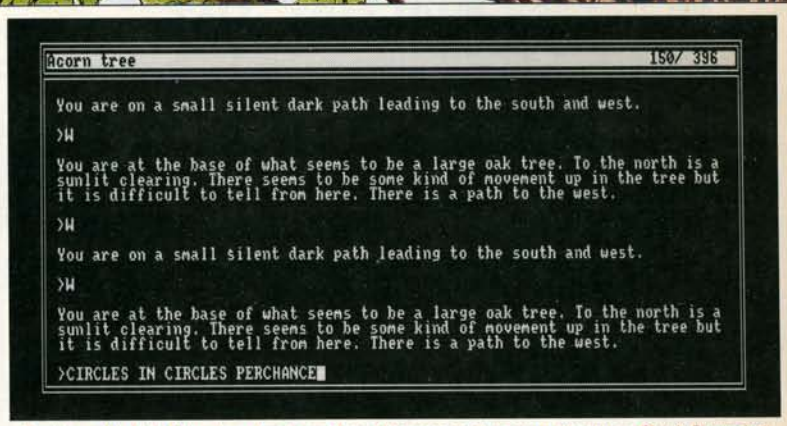
A sure-fire way to die is to venture into a hole with an unlit torch. Seemingly out of spite, the program will send a non-specific entity to devour you if you enter anywhere unilluminated. Entering the same place with a burning torch will find the monster gone and you intact. Now, it may well be the case that the beastie is afraid of the light but it is far more likely that this ploy is a warning to new adventurers that there is something to fear apart from fear itself.

Nuts!

Unlike many adventure games, Forestland (as well as Goblin Towers) does not mess around with long descriptive passages. This can serve two opposing purposes; it can either speed the game up (but this can be achieved using the SuperBrief) or it can sacrifice atmosphere. Frankly, the latter appears to be the case as you find yourself racing towards the end of the game with no birds singing, fluffy animals fluffing or interesting conversations enlivening your quest.

Despite these moans, Forestland is playable and would make a good leaping off point for those among our readers who dislike puns, comedic interventions or anything else which might divert them from the path to ultimate victory.

Beware however of saving to memory. In both Goblin Towers and Forestland whenever you get eaten, drown, die or disappear, two things happen. Firstly you are transported, rather ignominiously, back into an inverted CP/M screen (use PALETTE COMMAND to reverse this) and secondly the saved games in memory are wiped.



Graphics, or the lack of them, have long been a bone of some contention among adventurers. Classic Quests don't muck around - there are no pictures to ruin the flow or heighten the atmosphere, just text, text and more text

Country roads

However, we should not be thinking along such gloomy lines as the death of an intrepid adventurer. As long as you make sure to save to disc at regular intervals and avoid dark places, even the real green-horns amongst you should complete the quest.

In order to achieve this you must realise two things; firstly, there is very little humour - in fact the wittiest remarks come when you type in the odd curse or outright obscenity - there are none of the puns which resonate through, for example, the Rainbird games. Nor are there any of the quirky puzzles which you might find in Level Nine (gawd rest them) outings. Secondly, all of the the puzzles are very logical. The lack of humour gives a dead-pan ring to the entire affair, so the best course of action is to pretend that you are taking part in a lateral thinking competition. As a parting tip for the game itself, remember where the best nets are cast. ■

IN A NUTSHELL

Descriptive passages are terse. Parsing is fairly basic. Puzzles are good. If you want a hack'n'slash, then this really isn't for you. Some brain power is required, as is a great deal of patience. This wouldn't be a disappointment to receive as a surprise present.

FORESTLAND

ATMOSPHERE	2/5	CHALLENGE	3/5
ADDICTIVENESS		4/5	
8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT		9/15	

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ONLY THE LONELY

Working from home doesn't have to mean staying out in the cold. Andrew Bibby reports on a project that has been designed to help the home worker

Working from home can be a rewarding experience. In fact, some people say that it represents the future of work. What's promised is a kind of Industrial Revolution in reverse, which will see us all deserting the large centralised workplaces in favour of earning our livings in the comfort of our own homes.

Instead of commuting in to the office through rush-hour traffic or crowded trains, we'll be 'telecommuting': using microcomputers and modems, linking up with work colleagues through comms technology, going on-line to databases to access the information we need, and sending faxes instead of in-house memos.

We'll be freed from the constraints of having to live within travelling distance of the workplace so that, at least in theory, we will be able to move to the Scottish highlands, the Northumberland moors (or even a nice little converted farmhouse in the Auvergne) – in fact anywhere where there's a power source and a telephone line.

Telecommuting – or if you prefer, teleworking – is definitely in the news. Business consultants who researched the subject for the CBI and British Telecom (BT, not surprisingly, are delighted at the idea that businesses may be making yet more use of telecommunications) estimated that over 7 million employees were doing jobs which, at least partially, could be undertaken from home. By 1995, they said, 49% of the labour force could, in theory, be teleworking.

Home, sweet home

Of course some of us are working from home already, making our office in the spare bedroom or in a corner of the living room, and booting up our PCW first thing each morning. As 8000 Plus readers will know, you don't need expensive computer equipment to get started on a teleworking career. (Take no notice of the recent *Independent on Sunday* article which suggested that a minimum investment of about £3,500 on computer hardware and software would be needed first!)

Says OwnBase originator, Chris Oliver: 'I'd never even used a computer before, but I wanted the newsletter so badly.'

But although the idea of teleworking is a seductive one, there can be a downside too. Working by yourself can bring on its heels long hours of lone liness and isolation. There's the lack of stimulation that can come if you've only yourself for company – and the danger that you miss out on career promotion by being out of the mainstream of company life.

There's the question of how you integrate work with your ordinary family life, juggling your work commitments against childcare responsibilities or the need to get the washing up cleared before the kitchen sink finally vanishes from sight. employment as well. You're responsible for your own financial affairs and coping with tax, National Insurance and perhaps

Letters begin

OwnBase would hardly exist without its bi-monthly newsletter. It's the main method that members have for keeping in touch with each other, and it's full of news, business tips, and advice on legal or technical issues – as well as discussion about the problems and anxieties which sooner or later all home-based workers find they are facing.

The first newsletter was a simple photocopied affair, put out by Chris Oliver in 1986. About 35 people responded – and from that the organisation was born.

The OwnBase newsletter is still edited and produced by Chris Oliver from her home in Milborne Port, north Dorset, and she uses the same PCW 8512 which she bought for that first pioneering issue. "People keep saying that I should get a more sophisticated computer, but I'm too fond of it. I think it does a very good job," she says.

Chris says that she is thinking about using a desktop publishing package to help her in the production of the newsletter. At the moment, however, the sixteen pages of A4 are created simply using LocoScript 1 – though Chris has set up a bank of fifteen model page layouts to give some variety to the text. As well as using different column sizes, Chris also makes good use of the facility to change pitch sizes: it's surprising how different Pitch17 letters look from Pitch12.

"I learnt how to use the PCW producing the first newsletter," says Chris. "It took me about five weeks. I'd never even used a computer before, but I wanted that newsletter so badly."

Amadeus to the rescue

Chris says that, as well as wading her way through the official manual, she found the Clarity Guide to LocoScript helpful. A particular favourite was the audio cassette tutor produced by Reel Time: "a warm voice telling you what to do in simple language – better than a manual".

However, as Chris admits, the learning process was not without its difficulties. "When the machine would NOT do what I wanted, I'd go away and play Mozart's Requiem very loud," she says. "This sent me back to tell my computer, 'Beat that, you pathetic gadget'!".

As OwnBase develops, Chris is keen to see the organisation begin to make use of comms technology, to enable members to keep in touch more effectively with each other. "We're a devolved organisation, and the work is carried on in different homes. We communicate by phone and by snail mail, and it's really limiting," she explains. "There's a limit, too, to the number of people we can involve until we get on-line to each other."

The problem is simply financial. What Chris and the OwnBase members hope is that somewhere out there is an e-mail provider, a comms manufacturer or a software company who would like to play benefactor to the group. "We're an interesting little guinea-pig organisation, who could try out the technology for them," she argues. Any offers?

OWNBASE

VAT. You won't have an employer to pay you when you're sick or on holiday, or to contribute to a pension scheme for your eventual retirement. And you have to pay the bills: the telephone, the heating and lighting of your 'office' – even your own jars of coffee for the coffee breaks, too.

What home-based workers need, perhaps, is an informal organisation linking together other people in the same situation – a self-help group which can help to combat some of that loneliness, and which can provide support, encouragement and advice when it's needed.

This, at least, was what Chris Oliver thought was needed. Chris, a former social worker, found herself engaging in freelance work from home after she and her husband had moved from South Wales to Dorset. She describes herself as a "naturally solitary worker" but, even so, she found that she was beginning to suffer from isolation. Her solution was to buy an Amstrad PCW 8512 and use it to produce a brief newsletter, HomeBase, which she sent to a hundred or so friends and contacts.

DIY self-help

That was in 1986. Now, four years later, that original initiative has grown into a fully-fledged members' organisation, producing a regular bi-monthly newsletter, and offering a welcome to anyone "whose work, whether for others or for themselves, part- or full-time, paid or unpaid, is done at home".

OwnBase (the name was changed after some learned friends from Sainsburys pointed out that their DIY shops had a monopoly on the original name) can now boast a membership in an extraordinary range of jobs: from A Level marking to Aromatherapy, computer consultancy to cake making, inventing to inn sign painting. If you're a home-based worker, the chances are that there's somebody in OwnBase in your line of work; and you won't be surprised to know that 8256s, 8512s and 9512s are all well-represented among the membership.

OwnBase maintains the informality which Chris Oliver used in her first newsletter. There are regular meetings of members in a number of geographical areas (currently Hampshire, London, Herts/Beds, Cheshire/Lancs and Wessex), as well as occasional gatherings elsewhere, like the one held recently in Cheltenham. But most contact takes place through the columns of the newsletter.

The latest issue, for example, has contributions from members on a range of practical questions facing the home-based worker: how to get paid on time, how to make more space for work, what to do about your business during holiday periods, what to do with the 9512 manual (use it as a doorstop!).

There are several letters from members in response to an earlier article about the health and safety implications of using a computer at home ("In spite of taking regular breaks from the word processor I was still getting a stiff neck and aching shoulders. Then I lowered the seat to the height suggested.")

There are two brief suggestions about ways to undertake the self-publishing of a book (mind you, a better idea might be to read the two articles we ran in 8000 Plus last year!) There is a helpful article about the implications of planning permission rules, building regulations and the coming of the dreaded poll tax for home workers.

Membership offer

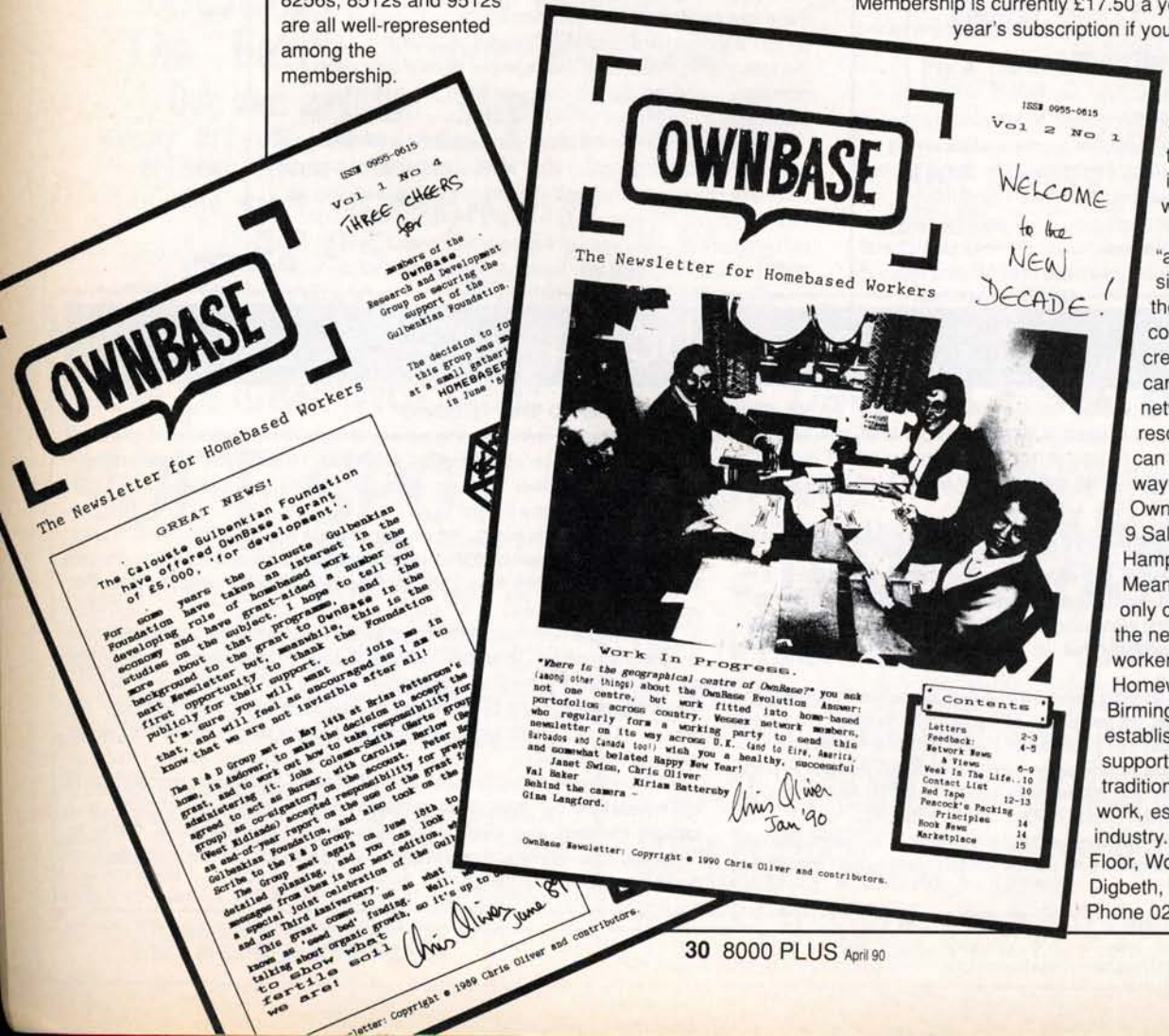
And, finally, there is plenty of news about OwnBase itself. OwnBase has grown steadily over the last few years, but is still only reaching a tiny percentage of two million or so people who are working from home. Almost all the work for the organisation is being put in voluntarily, though the group received a boost last year when the Gulbenkian Foundation chipped in with a £5,000 grant. An eighteen strong 'research and development' group of members is now investigating ways that OwnBase can expand – and attract more members. Membership is currently £17.50 a year (10% off the first year's subscription if you pay by direct debit).

Anyone considering membership may prefer first, however, to take up the offer of a free copy of the OwnBase newsletter, in order to see exactly what the group has to offer.

If you do join, they say, "as a member you can simply sit back and allow the 16-page newsletter to combat that sense of creeping isolation. Or you can take part in active networking - trading skills and resources. Or perhaps you can join in and influence the way OwnBase grows."

OwnBase's contact address is 9 Salisbury Road, Andover, Hampshire SP10 2JJ.

Meanwhile, OwnBase isn't the only organisation catering for the needs of home-based workers. The National Homeworking Unit is a Birmingham-based organisation established in 1987, primarily to support homeworkers engaged in traditional low-paid and low-status work, especially in the clothing industry. The Unit is based at 3rd Floor, Wolverley House, 18 Digbeth, Birmingham B5 6BJ. Phone 021 643 6352. ■



Powerhouse

At the other end of the work spectrum, is the Telecommuting Powerhouse, an American-style networking organisation dedicated to promoting the pleasures and satisfactions of high-tech telework. The Telecommuting Powerhouse produce a newsletter and operate telephone advice 'surgeries' (annual subscription £12). They also offer a free database service where teleworkers can list their skills. The Powerhouse can be contacted on 0836-238812.

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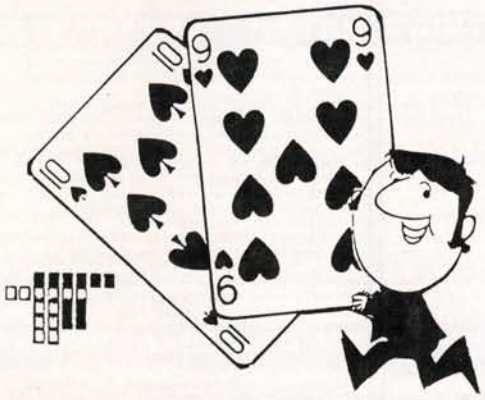

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FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

Why restrict your writing prowess to your native shores? Nick Vandome encourages you to think global!

As anyone who has ever put pen to paper or finger to word processor knows, this writing business is not only stimulating and rewarding (sometimes) but more frequently fickle, frustrating and downright annoying. Therefore, it seems to make sense for us beleaguered writers to try and make the most out of what we write and get the maximum mileage out of every article, short-story or block-busting novel. One of the best ways of doing this is to widen your market opportunities and duplicate your sales by writing for overseas magazines and newspapers.

Due to a somewhat misspent adulthood, I have had the chance to travel to, and write in, several countries where there are numerous openings for freelance writers. However, you do not have to be an itinerant globetrotter to exploit the overseas market: even the most homebound writer can increase their income by selling their material abroad. The most important things needed are equally large quantities of patience and International Reply Coupons (IRCs – 55p. from the Post Office).

The initial step in writing for overseas markets is to identify the individual publications that exist. If you are not fortunate enough to be in a newsagent's shop in Sydney, Boston or Nairobi, then a visit to the local library might be your best course of action. Here you will find two books that should cover every area you are looking for: *The Writers' and Artists' Yearbook*, (A. & C. Black) and the *Willings Press Guide*, (British Media Publications). The *Yearbook* covers all major newspapers in the Commonwealth countries while Willings lists the principal publications of the Americas, Europe, Australasia, the Far East, Africa and the Middle East. Although this sounds like a goldmine, a lot of the entries are for trade magazines and a more useful section is the one on UK agents for European magazines.

Sources of advice

Another failing of Willings is that it only lists the addresses of publications. If you are interested in writing for American or Australian markets (the two most lucrative areas) then it would be a good idea to get hold of: *The Writer's Market, US*, (Writers' Digest Books, F. & W. Publications, 1057 Dana Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45207. $24, plus $3 postage and packing), and *The Writers' Photographers' Market Guide for Australia and New Zealand*, (Australian Writers' Professional Services, PO Box 28, Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3001). Not only do these two books list the most useful markets for freelancers but they also include various trivial facts that a writer likes to know, such as editorial requirements and rates of pay.

Where, what and how?

Once you have the names and addresses of some potential markets the first thing to do is to resist the temptation to shove everything you have ever written into an envelope and send it off in the hope of finding instant fame and fortune. All this will do is create more work for the international postal service as it comes winging its way defiantly back to you. Patience is not only a virtue but a necessity when dealing with overseas markets and you should look at the task as a long, drawn-out campaign that might take months to come to fruition.

The first step is to send a covering letter, outlines of ideas for articles (up to about three at a time), any samples of your published work that you think are relevant, an SAE and an

Best bet abroad

In my own experience the best overseas publication for British writers to approach, in terms of range of subject matter, rates of pay and editorial courtesy, is the Australian magazine *TraveLeisure*, (PO Box 6495, Gold Coast Mail Centre, Queensland 4217), a glossy, 100 page publication that covers a wide range of issues.

Although it is principally a travel magazine I have written articles for it covering travel, conservation, education and witchcraft. The key is to find a topic that is different and to write about it in an upbeat, entertaining way. Seventy-five percent of the magazine is written by freelancers and the editor, Alexander McRobbie, said, "We are strongly travel-orientated, but we also cover entertainment, leisure and lifestyle topics." (Personally, I am never quite sure what a lifestyle topic is but it seems to cover just about anything!)

Mr McRobbie is also very much aware of the role freelancers play in the magazine, "The most dedicated staff writers can't encompass the range of experiences that hundreds of freelances cover, so we value outside contributions. Apart from paying them well, we treat freelancers' submissions with respect. No matter how badly written an article may be (and we get dozens like that) we know that somebody's guts have gone into that work." This is backed up by a very helpful 'Where you went wrong' sheet that is sent with all rejected articles.

Any article submitted to TraveLeisure will have a much better chance of success if illustrations are provided, preferably colour transparencies. As Mr McRobbie said, payment is good for accepted articles, AUS$300 (£150) per 1000 words, and the cheques can be paid straight into British banks. One final benefit of writing for TraveLeisure – they maintain the very reasonable practice of paying for articles on acceptance.

Three Australian magazines which might look twice at whinging poms. Traveleisure is the recommended journal.

IRC. Even with this careful planning, it is perfectly possible that your letter will disappear into the Great International Editorial Void but with luck you will get back an expression of interest or a commission. (If you are submitting an unsolicited manuscript, it is best to include two or three IRCs, depending on the weight of the MS.)

Perhaps the hardest thing for a writer, stuck in storm-swept Britain, to discover about overseas markets is what type of material will sell best. Basically, the answer is non-fiction and non-parochial. Travel articles are saleable almost anywhere in the world and even if you have never left the security of your own home town, it is still possible to put together a travel piece that would be of interest to people in other parts of the globe.

One very definite area is that of special interests or hobbies; be it flower-arranging, tiddlywinks or renovating Sherman tanks. If you have written for a special interest magazine in Britain, then there will undoubtedly be a comparable publication somewhere abroad and there is no reason why you should not offer your expertise to them.

Although you should not take for granted that the citizens of darkest Peru know all about your local football team, do not be afraid of writing about things that are very definitely British. People around the world still tend to think that the British are something of an eccentric bunch (probably with some justification) and there is a huge market for articles on our quirky habits. For instance, features on haggis-hurling or bog-snorkelling would certainly have a wide international appeal – although a little background information and explanation might be needed first!

Down under and the USA

In general, the best place for writers to concentrate their efforts towards overseas markets is the Queen of the Soap Operas, Australia. The reason for this is two-fold; firstly, except for the odd 'struth' and 'fair dinkum' they talk, and write, in a similar fashion to ourselves. This means that you do not have to worry about unusual spelling or grammar and you can write in exactly the same way as you would for a UK publication. Secondly, per capita, Australia probably has a wider range of magazines than anywhere else in the world. There seems to be an equivalent for every British publication, and with a quarter of the population this makes good odds for freelancers from overseas.

The American side of things is not quite so promising. True, there are thousands of potential markets (over 4000 in the Writer's Market) but the approach and style of many of them is a bit different to the UK. They go for a much bolder, 'grab you by the throat', approach and this should be kept in mind not only when submitting articles but also with query letters. There is no room for pussy-footing around so say what you mean and try your best to say it as punchily and as positively as possible.

African and Asian markets are unlikely to make you rich quick – some may not even pay you at all – but if you are planning a visit to any of these countries it would be worth getting in touch with the editors of the English language newspapers in these places. If nothing else, it may give you a contact in a strange country.

1992 and all that

The much advertised opening up of European trade markets in 1992 is not only going to be a time of celebration for the likes of Robert Maxwell; the humble freelance writer is also likely to benefit from the single market. With Europe being viewed as a single trade entity there will be every opportunity to increase sales throughout the European Community. This can be done either through syndicates or the personal approach. Syndicates covering Europe can be found in the Writers' and Artists' Yearbook and they will generally take anything they think will attract a European editor. Boom subjects on the continent these days are business, information technology, science and medicine – so basically, if you can write about money generating subjects then you stand a good chance of generating some yourself.

If you want to approach European magazines on your own then the system is the same as for any other overseas markets, and this is where Willings comes into its own with its extensive list of European publications. Again, you are best to stick to more serious subjects (fiction is unlikely to sell well although the discovery of Hitler's diaries is usually a bestseller) and find out about translation services if necessary, (see margin note.)

With the world changing so rapidly around us, this is an ideal time for writers to exploit the limitless opportunities that exist from Lagos to Los Angeles. Not only may it bring in some welcome foreign cheques but it will also give you the chance to say that you are an international author! ■

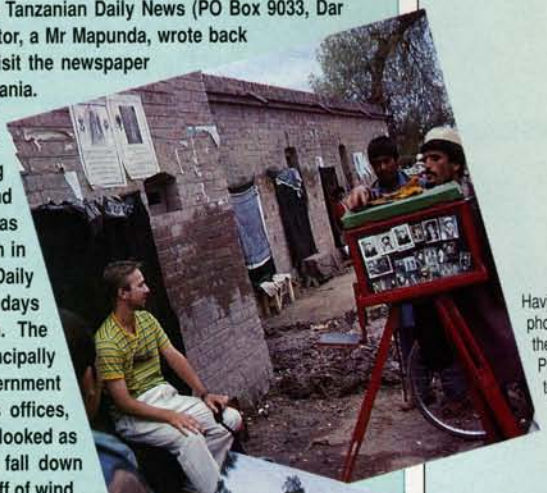
The Daily News, Tanzanian style

Before I left on my globetrotting venture I wrote to newspapers in various countries that I was going to visit. Of the replies the most useful was from the Tanzanian Daily News (PO Box 9033, Dar es-Salaam). The Editor, a Mr Mapunda, wrote back and invited me to visit the newspaper when I reached Tanzania.

Dar es-Salaam is a city which is both unassuming and uninteresting and when I arrived I was glad of the diversion in the form of the Daily News as I had five days to wait for a train. The newspaper is principally eight pages of Government propaganda and its offices, when I found them, looked as though they would fall down with the smallest puff of wind.

Mr Mapunda was a small, quiet man who drank copious amounts of Coca Cola and looked as though he was disillusioned with the newspaper business because he had never unearthed a world-shattering scoop. Nevertheless, he was very enthusiastic about having a British freelancer in town and he asked me if I would write about my travels in Kenya and Tanzania. This occupied most of my time while I was in Dar' and then Mr Mapunda asked if I could send him articles from the rest of the countries that I visited.

I don't know if any of these articles were ever published, and Mr Mapunda was very apologetic about the fact he could not pay me, but for once this was the least of my concerns. As a result of the article I gained a useful contact in Dar es-Salaam and I saw a face of the city that I would have otherwise missed – just another advantage of writing for overseas markets.



Having my photo taken in the northern Pakistan town of Peshawar.

And again, at the beginning of the Khyber Pass.

(M)other tongues

If you are writing for European markets a translation may be required. Try your local college or The Institute of Translation and Interpreting, 318a Finchley Road, London NW3 5HT (telephone 01 794 9931). They charge between £35 and £60 per 1000 words depending on the language and the technical content of the article.

SPEAKEASY

Brian Holley shows you how to discover your strengths and weaknesses as he takes to some serious SWOTting

Brian Holley looks at the essential ingredients that go together to make a successful marketing technique

With a certain amount of assistance from Westminster, 'marketing' became the byword of the Eighties and will certainly be a dominant maxim for the Nineties. One effect has been expensively produced pieces of coloured paper being shovelled into letter boxes daily by heavily laden posties. When you get a magazine home, the first thing you have to do is shake it well over a waste bin to clear it of debris. I've even started to get junk mail with my junk mail, so anxious are the marketeers to get their message to me.

But marketing is not all bad. Infact, I find it a rather interesting subject. It is becoming a sort of imprecise science like sociology and psychology and, indeed, mixes these two with a smattering of low level statistics.

The first requirement, so they tell me, is to undertake a SWOT analysis. Nothing at all to do with the speed of your right arm swing, SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The idea is that you make a list under each of these headings regarding your business. The word 'analysis' is added to make the process sound more complicated than it really is and thus impress both customers and competitors.

Consulting the oracle

Those who run small businesses sometimes make the mistake of thinking that marketing is only for the multi-nationals. It is a mistake that is probably a prime cause of failure on the part of many of the 90 per cent of small firms that collapse within five years of starting up. Knowing how to make a product or provide a service is one thing. Making your voice heard in the noise of the market place is quite another. I've often been amazed to see shops open in isolation from the rest of the world down a back street which nobody uses. It has been no surprise at all to see them shut down again a few months later. Similarly our local town broke out in a rash of pet shops last year. Only two survived. With a little market research these kinds of situations need not arise.

Three things are required to reach the market. The first is advice, the second training and the third, a system. There is a plethora of agencies offering advice for people running small businesses. Much of the help is free, some very reasonably priced.

Enterprise Agencies exist in all areas. They are designed to help small businesses get off the ground and wean them to maturity. The Small Firms Information Service has offices throughout the country and staff can offer expert advice and consultancy to both new and established businesses.

Getting in trim

In rural areas, the Rural Development Commission can offer advice, consultancy and financial help to get firms going and sustain them. In addition to these, of course, there are the banks and financial institutions all offering advice, though geared to marketing their own services.

A good place to learn about marketing techniques is the public library. Next stop is likely to be your nearest further education college. A local small business club may well run short courses or invite visiting speakers to meetings to discuss such important matters as marketing.

A colleague and I were recently on a course in which the information needs of each course member were identified. Over drinks in the bar we looked at each other knowingly. With a smile, my colleague said 'We've got it made' and the conversation moved to what sort of pay rises we might negotiate. You see, we both realised that between us we had access to most of the information the others needed.

Information is the foundation of good marketing and, as they say, 'There's a lot of it about.' A computer makes the collection and storage of information easier, and the PCW lends itself quite adequately and inexpensively to this task.

SWALK

A number one requirement is a good database to keep a record of customers and build a list of potential customers. This enables the small business to communicate regularly and effectively, thus reminding people that it still exists. I must admit to an aversion to personalised letters that are so obviously machine generated. These can be counter-productive as marketing tools, especially when they are written in such patronising terms as 'Dear Mr Holley, You may already have won £30,000 ... ' and so on . This is a clear candidate for the recycling plant.

However, when done considerately and professionally, personalised letters are probably more likely to be read than impersonal circulars. Databases and mail-merge facilities come into their own here.

A finger in the wind

But marketing is not just about making as much noise as possible in order to be heard. It is essential that the 'noise' is monitored to see what effect it is having, and that there are also regular periods of listening in silence to what customers are saying.

Monitoring can be accomplished by harnessing the power of a good spreadsheet. For some firms, looking at the 'bumps and potholes' of a graph showing income and identifying how closely they reflect a promotion may be enough. For others, longer term measurements may be needed showing trends in business activity. Whatever the case may be, like every other business activity, its effectiveness should be ultimately measured in financial terms.

An ear to the ground

Listening to what customers say is rather more demanding. It often involves asking them what they think about the product or service. This activity is, in itself, a good marketing technique. People generally like to be asked their opinion so there is a promotional element in this activity.

Some people view the computer as a toy, others as a luxury, and for many small businesses, a computer is essential. If well managed, it facilitates the handling of large volumes of data and speedy communications. With a serial port and modem, the humble PCW can be connected to an enormous volume of business information with links to databases world wide. The computer is certainly a vital tool in the hands of the market-orientated business person. ■

FLIPPER 2 PLUS and expanded memory: now you can have your cake and eat it.

FLIPPER 2 was quite an unusual program. It could split your PCW's memory in two, letting you run LocoScript 2 in one half and a CP/M program in the other. Or it could let you load two CP/M programs at once, one in each half. It could even tackle tricky programs like Mini Office and LocoFile. Best of all it could FLIP you from one half to the other in as little as two seconds, any time you wanted. And it wouldn't lose your place.

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Please send me **FLIPPER 2 PLUS** for my:

☐ 8512 ☐ 9512 ☐ Expanded 8256

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SOFTWARE IMPERATIVE

LocoFont

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OLD ENGLISH: The Old Antiques Shop, 27 The Square, West Street

PENMAN: *It seems ages since I last wrote to you - and longer since we met...*

ROMAN: The minutes of the meeting were accepted...

SANS SERIF: Taking this as our hypothesis, we can...

SCRIPT: We're glad to hear that you enjoyed the surprise party...

STANDARD: Please find enclosed confirmation of your order...

CAPITAL: FOR SALE: MINI 1000 - GOOD LITTLE RUNNER...

COPPERPLATE: You are invited to a housewarming party...

DECO:
Avacado Pear with prawns

DEFINITE: We have been forced to adopt a tougher approach...

FINESSE: The fête this year will be held on the 10th June...

MINI 15/17: This package is supplied on the terms shown below...

Mini PS: A word processor provides a facility to create documents...

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LocoFont for the PCW8256/8512 Printer

Set 1 – Standard, Sans Serif, Roman, Script, Copper Plate, Deco, Definite, Capitals, Finesse and Modern	£19.95 ☐
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LocoFont 24 for the 24 Pin Dot Matrix Printer

Text Set – Roman, Definite, Capitals, Finesse and Mini PS	£24.95 ☐
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To use LocoFont 24 you need the 24 Pin Printer Drivers Disc	£24.95 ☐

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RIGHT LITTLE GEM

Are Diamonds really forever? Nine months since its purchase, David Frost reveals what it's like living with Cirtech's Diamond hard disc

David Frost finds out whether the Diamond's cutting edge is as sharp as it's made out to be

Hard discs for the PCW are not new but, until recently, they attracted little interest because of their cost and the practical limits on their use. This has now changed and several manufacturers are offering discs which represent a real advance on anything previously available. Attracted by this recent flurry of developments, I bought a Diamond 32Mb(megabyte) hard disc from Cirtech in the autumn of last year.

The most difficult part of any project is the first month when one's experience is at its most incomplete and the problems seem to be at their most insurmountable. This was certainly so with the Diamond. It was easy enough to connect up and the installation procedure seemed to be progressing smoothly enough until I came to boot the programs. The sad truth of the matter was that neither CP/M nor LocoScript would work and I embarked on what was to prove a frustrating and expensive week of daily 'phone calls to Cirtech while the problem was sorted out. It eventually transpired that the installation disc did not match the handbook which omitted one critical stage in the installation process.

Somewhat to my surprise the installation disc contained CP/M v1.8 and in following the installation procedure I ended up with versions 1.4 and 1.8 on the hard disc, which seemed to prefer the earlier version. This also took some while to bowl out. Overall it was not a terribly encouraging introduction to such an expensive piece of equipment and I came near to sending it back on more than one occasion.

Two drives for the price of one

The hard disc is divided into two drives, each with a 16Mb or 1024 file capacity. In LocoScript 2 you keep the A, B (if fitted) and M drives and the hard disc becomes C and D, with movement between the drives being exactly the same as for an ordinary PCW. Organising files needs more care than with 3 inch discs because with 8 groups per drive, you are limited in the number of major headings you can store files under. If you run CP/M programs as well as LocoScript you will need one or two groups for CP/M files, thus reducing the options still further.

Hard discs are generally, very reliable but even so you would be foolish not to make copies of important files and this requires more thought than before. Whereas with floppy discs it is simplest to make copies using DISCKIT or LocoScript 2's disc copy facility, this is no good with a hard disc. Files must be copied using LocoScript's file copy facility – which can be slow – or by using PIP. COM in CP/M.

The prospect of using CP/M commands may strike fear into the hearts of those who only use LocoScript but it isn't difficult. Loco files have an archive tag which enables you to copy only those files which have been edited or created since the last copying session. PIP.COM can only be used to copy from one group at a time, so this means that each group has to be copied separately.

LocoScript group names, which are actually CP/M files of 0K, will also be copied. In practice this doesn't matter very much, though irritatingly, it can result in the group name on the back-up disc being different from the one you wanted. The LocoScript 2 [f4] Rename Group command doesn't work fully on 3 inch discs; you can use it to create a new group name, but you will have to remove all the unwanted group names from the disc using CP/M's ERASE.COM command. Type in DIR, to show the group names which are the files called GROUPNAME.GRP.

Using LocoScript 2

The Diamond disc will handle LocoScript 2 (but not LocoScript 1) and all its add-ons (LocoMail, LocoFile, LocoSpell and so on). Any files which were copied to the M drive from your start of day floppy discs will also be copied during the Diamond start up.

LocoSpell can be run either from the hard disc or M drive. I recommend the latter which is significantly faster, saving two and a half minutes on checking a 1250 word document. Putting the dictionary in group 7 of drive C will effect automatic copying to drive M if it wasn't on your start of day disc.

LocoFile datafiles are copied to drive M irrespective of where you keep them. However, this could result in overloading drive M. This can be prevented by changing the file type from FILENAME.DAT to something else – like FILENAME.DA. The change will not affect the cooperation of LocoFile.

What about CP/M?

In CP/M, the hard disc is divided into two drives called A and B, leaving your existing drives as C, D (if you have a second drive on the PCW) and M. Whereas with CP/M programs on floppy discs, little or no CP/M knowledge is needed, you will find that a nodding acquaintance with some of the simpler commands such as PIP, DIR, SET and RENAME is required in order to use the hard disc. The Diamond system requires the use of facilities which are not described in the Amstrad hand book, but which are satisfactorily covered in the

Keeping your options open

The Diamond disc uses **SCSI** (Small Computer Systems Interface). This is an industry standard which makes it possible to use the disc with other computers provided you have the right interface cards or utilities.

Data storage capacity

At first sight, 32Mb seems a phenomenal capacity but it can be difficult to use all of this space effectively. Just how much is used depends on the number and length of the files you create. Files are allocated in units of 16k (compared to 1k or 2k on the 3 inch drives) equating to about two pages of 8000 Plus. Unless you like to write two or three page articles, waste is inevitable; if you do, then you can store the equivalent of about 100, 3 inch A drive discs.

If you are unhappy about wasting space, one way to solve the problem is to write several letters in a file, starting each one on a different page and grouping them by date or addressee. The maximum number of files is 2048, roughly equal to 18 single density 3 inch discs with short letters. 2048 files will more than satisfy most PCW owners but creators of longish files benefit most from hard discs. Quite a lot of space can be taken up by program files.

accompanying Diamond hand book.

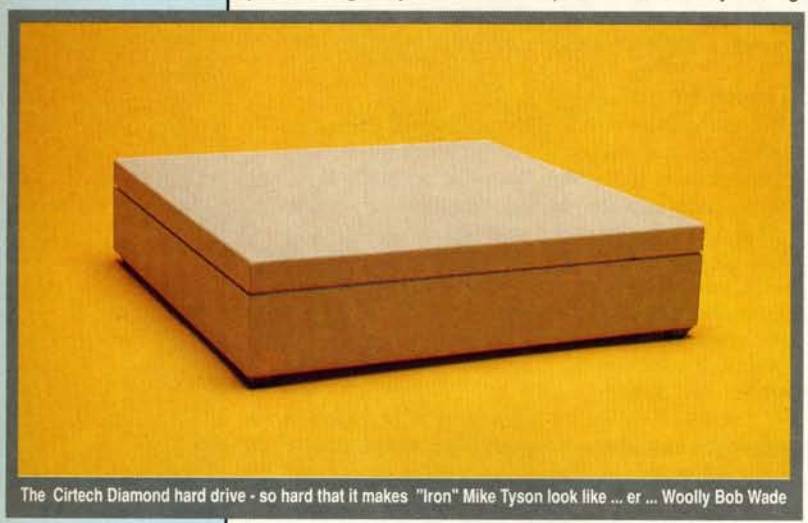
With floppy discs it is usual to run CP/M programs from group 0 and many PCW owners are probably unaware of the existence of other groups. In fact there are 16 (numbered 0 to 15) and if you run a lot of CP/M programs, you may find file management easier if more than one group is used.

Groups 0 to 7 are safe to use and correspond to the same groups in LocoScript; CP/M files in these groups will show in the same group in the LocoScript disc manager. Groups 8 to 15 are used by LocoScript for limbo files and if you use them for CP/M files, there is a real risk that when the disc becomes full LocoScript will erase them. It is easier, but not really essential, to segregate CP/M and LocoScript files in different groups.

Keeping tags
Most programs will automatically set an archive tag to indicate that a file has been copied. PIP can be told to copy only files without the tag.

The file manager – what it runs and what it doesn't

The Cirtech Diamond hard disc has a File Manager to simplify the use of CP/M programs and files. It is most certainly easier to use than the naked A> prompt. Files are listed alphabetically, so to make sure that the ones you use regularly are near the top, rename them by adding an A to the file name (for example, SC2 becomes ASC2). You can do this either from the hard disc's own File Manager, CP/M or from LocoScript.



The Cirtech Diamond hard drive - so hard that it makes "Iron" Mike Tyson look like ... er ... Woolly Bob Wade

A question of port
The Diamond disc fits onto the expansion port. If you already use this for other hardware, Cirtech will supply a through connector at extra cost.

Cirtech say the Diamond disc will run all standard CP/M programs but it seems not all CP/M programs are standard. Some will only run from the A> and others not at all as, the '**Will it? Won't it?**' table shows.

If in doubt, copy the program to the hard disc and see if it will work. Some programs, Stockmarket for example, are, in effect, two separate programs and will have to be treated as such with ACCOUNTS.COM and PRICES.COM being booted individually. Watch for other oddities too. Stockmarket does not seem to recognise data files which have an archive tag, so this must be switched off before running the program. You achieve this with the CP/M command SET.COM in the following manner:

(SET FILENAME.AC2[ARCHIVE=OFF]).

You don't have to have the hard disc running to be able to use the PCW. It can still be booted from a 3 inch start-of-day disc provided you press the space bar after the computer has beeped twice. The family's computer games fanatics are kept off the hard disc and have to boot their entertainment from floppy discs in the old fashioned way. This presents no problems and because of the nature of some games (for example, Head Over Heels) it wouldn't be possible to transfer copy protected software from floppy to hard disc anyway.

Will it? Won't it?

Program	From A>	From File Manager
Supercalc 2	Yes	Yes
Stockmarket	Yes	No
Investor	Yes	Yes
Market Merlin	Yes	Yes
Sharemaster	No	No
Cardbox	Yes	Yes
Money Manager	Yes	No

Should I buy one?

After all that, is it worth it? The saving in floppy discs falls well short of the cost of a hard disc and you will need some floppies anyway for back up purposes. Before splashing out the money look at the alternative of switching to a PC. Current discounts are very attractive and PCs with 20Mb discs can be obtained for under £600+VAT.

You will also need a printer (from £150+VAT) and software which is almost always much more expensive than its PCW counterpart. On balance it seems cheaper to stay with the PCW if you already have one. The Diamond hard disc will run with IBM PC compatibles and some other computers so if in the future you decide to change machines, the Cirtech hard disc can still be used.

The real saving for a PCW owner lies in the element of convenience. You can have all your programs on hard disc and swop from one to another without the hassle of fiddling with floppy discs. A cold boot to LocoScript 2 takes 86 seconds including add ons, LocoScript to CP/M takes 11 seconds and the reverse 75 seconds; all much faster than with floppies.

Although making back up discs sounds more complicated, the routine is easily learnt and is faster than backing up from 3 inch discs. CP/M programs like SuperCalc2 which are normally run from drive M for greater speed can be run just as quickly from the hard disc. The added speed and convenience of a hard disc over floppies has to be experienced to be truly appreciated. So why not try one out and see what you're missing? ■

● *At the time of going to press, Cirtech inform us that their hard drive will now automatically boot from LocoScript 2 and CP/M. Supplied free with each drive, will be a LocoScript upgrade - version 2.28a for the 8000 series machines and version 2.29 for the 9512. Because it is not a standard CP/M program, Protext will only work with the drive with one proviso: there must be a floppy disc within the PCW's internal A and B drives; formatted blank discs will suffice. Happily, Arnor are aware of the problem.*

Copying with PIP

To make optimum use of PIP with the hard disc, you will need some facilities which are not described in the CP/M hand book supplied with the PCW. Files copied across as part of the installation process should have the archive tag set once installation is complete. Do this with the command SET A:*.*[ARCHIVE=ON]. Replacing ON with OFF will do the reverse if you need to. PIP has to be told to copy only files which have been changed and also the group in which to look. Add A to the command to identify new or altered files and G followed by the group number to identify the group. For example C:=B:*.*[AG5] will copy all new or changed files in group 5 of the B drive to the C drive. Despite what it says on page 79 of the CP/M hand book, do not put a space between the PIP options. Normally with CP/M you operate in group 0 but you can get into any other group by typing the drive letter, group number and a colon.

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CONFESSIONS OF A FREELANCE

London-based copywriter Ian Pemble spreads the word on his PCW

Ian Pemble, freelance writer, says "Gawd bless the PCW, guvnor."

For 18 months I earned a good living entirely from my skill as a writer – and entirely on my Amstrad PCW8512. Apparently this is unusual. Then the Pound fell against the Dollar and knocked the bottom out of the Lawson and I needed a job. Over the next three months, I learned to use three different computers and only my warm relationship with my PCW gave me the courage to do it. This is my story.

According to a commonly misheld opinion, successful full-time writers are supposed to use great, throbbing IBM clones upon which they can also spread their sheets and data their bases. In other words, it is assumed – and this is the real calumny – that PCWs are only for amateurs. Rubbish of course.

I can't teach you anything new about using your PCW. I've had mine for almost two years and it was only during the writing of this very piece that I discovered that the [f1] menu in LocoScript's disc management screen allows you to change disc without turning the whole thing off and on each time. But what I can do is offer encouragement to those of you who also write – some of tomorrow's famous writers are already bashing out the business on machines like yours and mine.

Joker in the pack

Now of course I am not at all famous, nor likely to be, because I have been earning my money writing recruitment advertising copy. However, some years ago, I was the editor of *Knave*, one of those publications that are coyly known as 'men's magazines'. We won't dwell upon why I took the job or why I gave it back again. What I will say is that during my reign, I managed to throw out most of the dreary, sex-related drivel that passes for writing in these publications. I encouraged any writers who came along to write humour instead. Ah, the power ...

In fact I was quite shameless. I banned sex completely from the monthly short story. Consequently, this became much sought after by writers.

A couple of years later, the word got round that I was going to go freelance – albeit as an advertising copywriter – and several colleagues from my *Knave* days rallied round and invited me to a science fiction convention in Exeter – where I met even more writers.

I already had an 'electronic typewriter'. Electronic meaning that the keys could jam twice as fast as a manual machine. So I decided I needed a word processor. And who better to ask for advice than all those nice writers I'd met and become bosom buddies with in Exeter?

Market research

Professional writers seem to fall into two categories when it comes to high-tech writing machines; there are those who actually want a powerful computer to play with – and which they also happen to write on. And then there are those who want a glorified typewriter which does what it's told when it's told to and gives no lip.

In the first category, I found Terry Pratchett (author of the *Discworld* series of books), who is a confirmed computer buff. He was enormously helpful, spending hours on the phone spelling words like 'PC' and '80386SX' – and then scared me bitless by assuring me that I couldn't lay my hands on anything decent for under £2,000.

I then turned to a chap called Neil Gaiman who is now a top writer for *DC Comics* and destined for much greater fame still.

"Oh you need an ICBM TurboThruster GCHQ007," he explained as to a child. "They only cost three grand. But don't take my word for it, talk to the bloke who recommended it to me – Terry Pratchett."

Two down, where do I go next? Well I'd like to have called Iain Banks. I had drunk deeply of his wisdom and hipflask at the convention and we had got on famously. And

Jobsworth

Every recruitment advertisement consists of the same basic elements: the job title, a bit about the company, a bit about the job and a bit about the person they'd like to do it. Then there will be a salary/benefits paragraph and another telling you how to reply. It's perfectly possible to write a decent, effective advertisement using this formula.

My job is to go one better. I sometimes have to attract people to low paid jobs, by stressing the attractions of the job to the sort of person who might like it. Then again, I may have to target people who are not even looking for a job, highly-trained, much sought-after executives who may only be browsing through the job columns.

Every other advertisement on the page is telling much the same story; you've rarely got more than 250 words to play with and the same six elements must go in every time. Thankfully there are art directors in this world too, so between us we can think in visual terms as well – but it's certainly a highly disciplined field for a writer to work in.

I suppose it's a bit like composing crossword puzzles, they all look the same on the surface. Or maybe a poem is a better example. Every word in a poem is there for a purpose, and part of that purpose is to get the meaning across clearly and succinctly – often within further confines such as metre or rhyme. And yes, I do write poetry.

he'd also said he used an Amstrad but ... I'd lost his phone number. I would like to be able to tell you that *The Wasp Factory* (his first best-selling novel) was written on a PCW – but alas I cannot swear to it.

From the horse's mouth

Then I did what I should have done all along and called Paul Barnett. Paul is a writer's writer. Not because he writes under an assumed name (John Grant) but because he's always busy, always writes beautifully and works tirelessly at organising write-ins, conferences, cricket matches and anything else that improves the lot of his fellow scribes.

"What you want," he said, "is a PCW."

"What's that?" I cringed.

"About 500 quid."

"Gawd bless you guv'nor."

"But don't take my word for it, talk to the bloke who recommended it to me – Dave Langford."

It might come as a shock for some of you to learn that your cuddly columnist is really quite famous outside these pages – or that he actually looks like that drawing of him.

Learning curves

So I enjoyed 18 months of happy motoring from my PCW and did very nicely thank you. Then I managed to upset my main client, without realising that I had done so and at what turned out to be an economically disastrous moment. This time my journalist friends rallied round.

One friend was about to join a West Country firm of publishers, leaving his London-based magazine without a Managing Editor. Maybe I could run it for a couple of issues as a freelance? The only thing was, it was a magazine about computers. Well, I'd used the PCW and half a dozen other word processor systems, so I should be able to pick it up relatively quickly. I took the job.

The magazine was for PC enthusiasts, so I had to learn how to use a PC to receive copy and pictures on 5.25 inch floppies. This meant calling up and photographing any screen-shots as well as exporting the copy as an ASCII file.

"It's a simple routine, I'll write it down for you," said my friend reassuringly.

"Exporting the copy where?" I asked.

"Into the Apple Macintosh – that's where we do all the desktop publishing."

I suddenly realised that my first introduction to computers was like being oversubscribed on a blind date. Not just one computer to grapple with, but two.

PC meets WC

I never learned those 'simple routines' and always used the notes. Besides, I was too busy getting to grips with my Macintosh. Normally this wouldn't have been a problem. It is incredibly easy to find your way around a Mac, indeed the purists criticise it for using up too much memory rolling on its back to have its tummy tickled.

A few months later I found myself working as a Saturday sports sub-editor (or just plain Sub to those in the hacking trade) on one of the best new Sunday broadsheet newspapers. This used yet another computer format called the Atex system. If the Macintosh operating system is supposedly the most friendly ever made, Atex must surely be the least.

It's got a keyboard that wouldn't be out of place on the flight-deck of a Jumbo jet. I recognised the QWERTY formation in the middle but then there were all the extra keys – banked left, right and across the top – which were supposedly 'shortcuts'.

Shortcut One: you are in the Head (the display menu at the top of the screen) on the Command line. You want to call up an internal file. You type in a 'Queue enquiry' using the file name and press 'Execute'. Then you call up the story using a slightly different code, press Execute again ... and there it is.

Shortcut Two: you are in the Head again. You want to call up an external file. You tab once to a section in the Head called 'Wire'. You delete the asterisk that lurks therein and type in the name. Then you press Execute and the machine replies 'File not found'.

Fancy you being silly enough to press Execute and expect the machine to actually execute! What you do is press the Supershift button in the bank to the left of the Shift button (remembering proudly that pressing the two together is called Hypershift, only you can't remember what that's for) and then you press the blank button 2 which is to the right of the button labelled 'Fix'. No I don't know what Fix does, I never had time to find out.

The homecoming

Meanwhile, the advertising work had popped up again, so for the first time in months I was back in front of the PCW. I was a little nervous. Would it seem clumsy? Not after Atex of course, but some of the word processor software I'd been using on the Mac had been pretty sophisticated and impressively expensive to boot. Not only that but also with the Macintosh you do have to use a mouse.

This is fine for moving pictures and text around once you've managed to get them on screen, but not so good for typing in the stuff in the first place – unlike the (far less expensive PCW and its far less expensive word processing software) the Mac has no [LINE], [PARA] or [PAGE] buttons for instance. So you find yourself taking your hands off the keys all the time to reach for the rodent.

In the past few months I have sat in front of more computers than I ever dreamed of – and now dream of more computers than I've ever sat in front of. But I still prefer my trusty old PCW. It's familiar and comforting. A simple keyboard with everything where I expect to find it. No complicated key combinations to remember. No mouse to distract me. And lots more potential if I ever decide I need a 'real' computer ... which I doubt. As you've probably gathered by now, I still have mixed feelings about 'computers'. ■

I lived a lie as a computer expert

In my time I've written hundreds of apparently successful advertisments for computer professionals, from Programmers to Senior IT (Information Technology) Consultants – and I've barely understood a word.

There's no big trick to it. You receive bundles of bumph on the jobs including all the technical stuff. Anything you don't understand you repeat exactly (perhaps with a deft, creative comma) on the assumption that the people you are talking to will understand it, so why should you?

I never made any secret of this, yet I've come to be looked upon as something of an expert in the field. Whereas now I can talk intelligently about computers for at least ten minutes, then I would have been pushed to manage three. Funny old game, isn't it?

A Poem

Books have always been
written by hand,
Whether desktop fast or
copperplate slow.
Except for Uncle Tom's Cabin,
of course
Which was written by Harriet
Beecher-Stowe.

Last stop

Just to finish, I present the Ian Pemble guide to good reading. Book prizes are normally pretentious affairs, full of in-jokes and incestuous nominations. So here are just a few of the works by writers I have known and rubbed shoulders with.

The Discworld Series by Terry Pratchett, published by Corgi Books. Soft backs at £2.99 each.

Good Omens by Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman, published by Gollancz. Hard backs at £12.95

The Wasp Factory by Iain Bainks, published by Futura. Soft backs at £3.99

Consider Phoebus by Iain M Bainks (the same chap), published by Futura. Soft backs at £4.99

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2 3/4 x 1 7/16	4.51	7.61
3 1/2 x 15/16	4.15	7.13
3 1/2 x 1 7/16	5.37	9.52
3 1/2 x 1 15/16	7.79	12.96
4 x 15/16	5.19	8.04
4 x 17/16	6.09	9.96
4 x 1 15/16	7.65	12.78
3 ACROSS		
2 3/4 x 15/16	3.51	6.23
2 3/4 x 1 7/16	4.39	7.51
3 1/2 x 15/16	3.69	6.36
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3 1/2 x 1 15/16	6.73	11.46
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MAKE THE GRADE

Sick of not being able to use large programs on your 8256? Tim Smith shows you how to transform the standard PCW into a turbo nutter machine

The top end of the PCW range – in the form of 9512 and 8512 machines – always seem to receive the attention. We've talked about RamPacs which will give you megabytes of memory, we've paid heed to the larger of the LocoSpell dictionaries. So now it's about time to look at the grand-daddy, the original, the front-runner in PCWs – the 8256. Before the proud owners of 512k machines flip these pages to read about careers in computing or type in a listing, there could be something here for you. After all, do you really know how your chips are stacked? And wouldn't you like a quick look into the workings of the B: drive?

On the up and up

The PCW 8256 is so-called because it packs a punch of 256k of memory. But nowadays this just does not seem to be enough. Equally, its single disc drive which stores 173k of data on each side, pales in comparison to the B: drive of its bigger comrades which store up to 706k. One of the joys of having two drives is that file transfers can be luxurious events during which you sit back and watch two red drive lights flickering as the data whizzes from one disc to the other. No more changing discs every two minutes. If you upgrade the memory as well, you would be able to copy an entire A: drive disc without taking it from the drive.

There are two ways of upgrading your PCW8256. The first (and safest) is to contact Dictaphone on 0926 429124. These are the people who have official clearance from Amstrad to fiddle around inside your PCW. Another good point here is that using Dictaphone will not invalidate your guarantee. For prices and details on this, see margin.

The other way of pepping up the PCW is to do it yourself. This should work out cheaper, is not as difficult as it might seem and is an excellent way of gaining some insight into the workings of your machine.

1

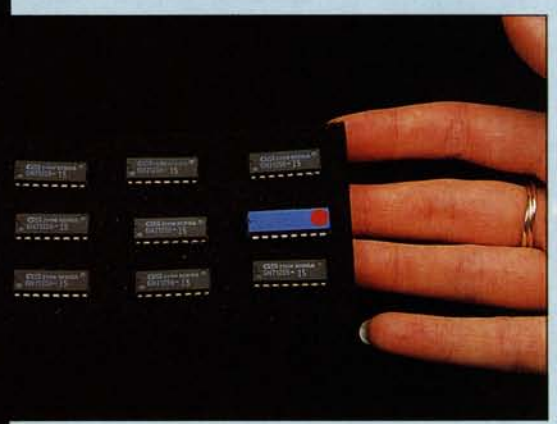
```
CP/M Plus Amstrad Consumer Electronics plc
v 1.4, 61k TPA, 1 disc drive, 112k drive M:

A>
```

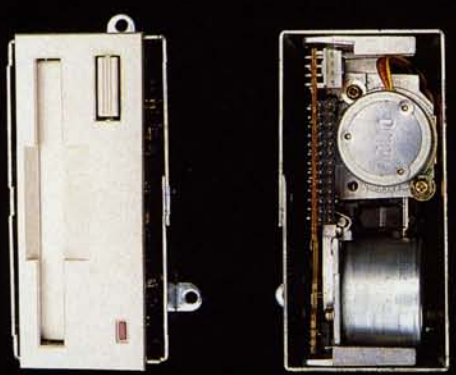
1 BEFORE: A common-or-garden PCW8256 startup screen running under CP/M. You may ask what a TPA is, why drive M: only has 112k of memory when there was supposed to be 256k. Well, the the TPA is the Transient Program Area or, in layperson's terms, the place in memory where programs are executed. 61 from 256 leaves 195. Of course CP/M (and LocoScript) needs somewhere to live and uses up 83k. 83 from 195 leaves 112 and that is the size of your M(emory) drive.

2 These chips were provided by Silicon City. Eight of them are required to convert the 8256 to an 8512, giving you 32k a chip. In the not too distant past you would have been lucky to get a home computer with 32k of memory let alone 512k!

2



3



3 The 3 inch drive, also courtesy of Silicon City. It's all very well having a massive memory, but you will also need to store more information permanently. The normal A: drive disc allows you to store up to 173k of data while a double density B: drive gives you a massive 706k (formatted).

4 AFTER: With all the work done, you can sit back and look at the glory of your new, porkier, power-packed PCW. The TPA remains the same but the size of the M: drive has more than trebled to 368k. What's more, you also have two disc drives. Now all you need do is add a RamPac, a 3.25 inch drive, a 5.25 inch drive, a hard disc, another RamPac ... and the list goes on and on.

4

```
CP/M Plus Amstrad Consumer Electronics plc
v 1.4, 61k TPA, 2 disc drive, 368k drive M:

A>
```

Don't do it yourself

If you are at all unsure about carrying out these upgrade procedures and your PCW is still under guarantee, then Dictaphone Ltd will carry out all the work for you. Not only that, but they'll do it in the comfort of your own home. They carry out three types of upgrade:

Drive only £149 (plus VAT)
Memory £89 (plus VAT)
Both £199 (plus VAT)

All of these prices include parts and on-site fitting. Dictaphone need all requests for upgrades to be received in writing. There is a four to six week waiting period in which the company will order the parts and find their way to your house. The address to which you will need to write is:

Dictaphone Company Ltd
Parkhouse
10 Park Street
Leamington Spa
Warwickshire
CV32 4XF

Cost of living

Here's the information you all want to hear, how much will it all cost? Here is a selection of prices available at the time of going to press. And don't forget the art of the haggle if you're thinking of getting both chips and the drive.

Memory upgrades

Silicon City	£26.04 (plus VAT)	0209 891141
West of Britain	£37.00 (plus VAT)	0558 823782
RSC Ltd	£36.00 (plus VAT)	0923 243301
SK Marketing	£49.00 (plus VAT)	01 3816618

Second drives (FD4 1mb drive)

Silicon City	£107.87 (plus VAT)	0209 891141
West of Britain	£113.00 (plus VAT)	0558 823782
RSC Ltd	£115.00 (plus VAT)	0923 243301
SK Marketing	£115.00 (plus VAT)	01 3816618

MEMORY UPGRADE

Whether you have an 8512, 8256 or 9512 you all have one thing in common ... chips. So now it's time for a quick guide to these beasts. Computers used to be massive edifices with scientists and engineers rushing around them, pandering to their every whim and, if need be, hardwiring them. This process is as brutal as it sounds, it entails physically altering switches or – at the extreme – changing the connections.

A few guidelines should be followed when dealing with chips. Bearing in mind that you have paid out good money for them you should avoid any chance of static electricity contact with them. Some people advise earthing yourself by touching a radiator or such-like piece of metal before going near the chips you are about to fit.

Next, the sixteen legs which attach the chips to the PCW's board are delicate. To lose one of these would be akin to amputating one of Nijinsky's and still expecting him to win the Prix de L'Arc de Triomphe or dance Swan Lake.

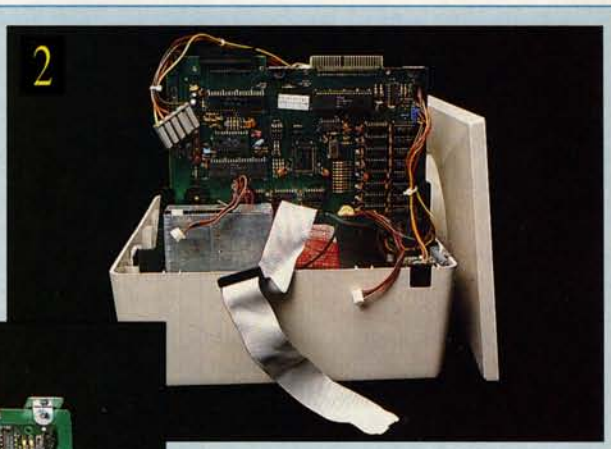
In most cases you will be provided with a practice chip which does nothing other than to give you the chance to see how to do damage. Make good use of this chip and learn from your mistakes.

1

SED

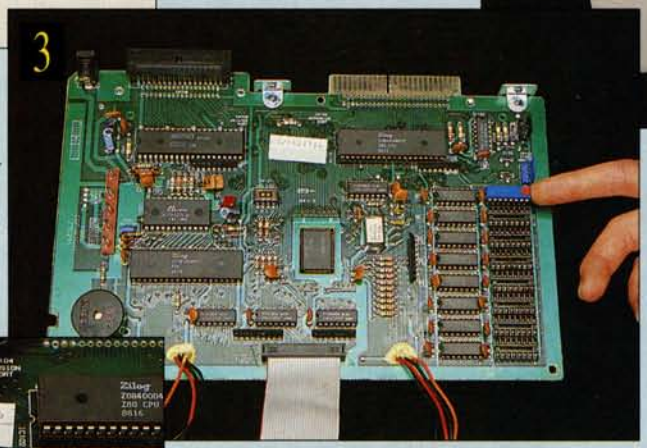
1 The first thing to do is to switch off your PCW at the mains. The machine will store some residual voltage which will remain in the copper wires leading from the monitor. If you are in doubt, it might be an idea to leave the PCW off over night. To actually get inside your PCW you will need to remove the six holding screws at the back of your machine. Lay it down on a blanket or rug (even an Armani jacket would do) on a flat surface and take a cross-head screwdriver. Remember to keep all the screws together!

2



2 The board itself. This is the heart of the machine and must be disconnected from the innards of the PCW. The two small (one blue, one white), four pin connectors are for the keyboard and video (screen) cables and these should be gently tugged out. The large grey (four pin) connector is the power cable and needs some patience (probably a little help from a flat-head screwdriver for leverage) in order to disconnect it from the board. Be very careful when removing this not to bend the board. Once these have been dealt with you will have to disconnect the A: drive. This entails pulling two cables; one grey ribbon and one coloured (orange and black) four-way power-lead from the drive. Be sure to make a note of the alignment of the larger cable. You can either do this by observing the direction of the small plastic nodule on the side of the connector or ... by remembering which way the writing was facing.

3



3 Follow the finger and you will see a rather garish looking blue chip. No stock-exchange jokes here, this is the practice chip. Fitting this should allay any fears you might have had about the real thing. The best way is to gently rock the chip from front to back until it slides into place. It provides no extra memory, in fact it serves no purpose other than to make you feel more comfortable. Try it in each one of the eight free slots – if nothing else it will clear out any gunk which might have clogged them up.

4a

4b

4 On your board, if you look closely, you will find four tiny, yellow dip-switches. These have to be altered with a pencil end – or some very small, sharp fingers. At one end of the small box in which the switches live is a helpful sign saying 'ON'. You will see that the switches are set in the following manner:

A=ON, B=OFF, C=OFF, D=ON. What you will need to do is reverse A and B and leave C and D alone. This will leave you with the following settings:

A=OFF, B=ON, C=OFF, D=ON.

If your PCW was made before 1985 you will need to do some soldering. See the diagram for this.

5

5 Once you feel comfortable with the process of fitting the practice chip, it's time to move onto the real McCoy. At one end of each chip is a small semi-circular indentation. Look at the chips already fitted and note which way the indentations on these are facing. Make sure that the new set are facing in the same direction. Take your time and whatever you do, DO NOT FORCE THEM! This can't be over-emphasised. Remember Nijinsky and the damaged legs. If you do bend one of the legs you will have to, very gently, attempt to straighten them out. Do remember to tell the PCW that it has been upgraded (see 4a and 4b).

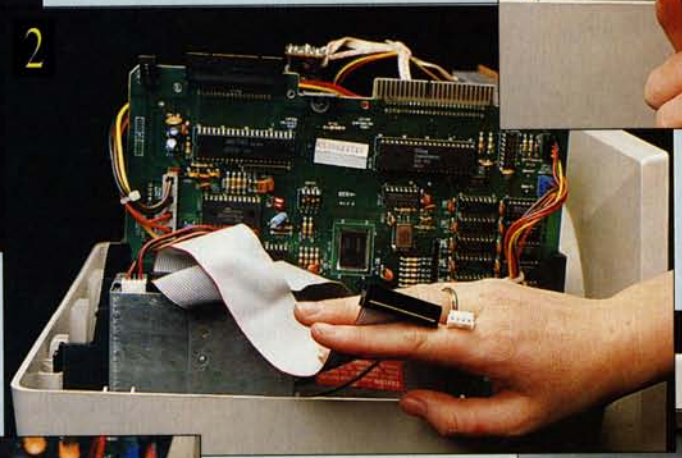
Once you have altered the switches and made sure that each one of the chips is securely in place, you are ready to reconnect the leads and replace the board. Remember that the two edge connectors (for the printer, which is the smaller one, and the larger expansion edge) go towards the top of your PCW. All this done and the back secured in place, you should now have a 512k PCW!

Congratulations. You will see this when you either boot LocoScript or CP/M (CP/M will actually tell you that you have a 368k drive M:). If, by any chance, you don't get the message then re-try the fitting operation, making sure that all the chips are securely home. If this doesn't work, contact your dealer – some of the chips may have been faulty.

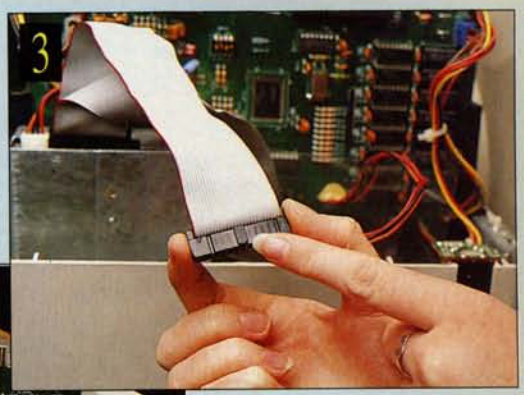
The PCW8256 is a friendly machine. It does its best while trying to carry out your every whim. But the more you use the machine, the more you want from it and the faster you want it. After a while a B: drive becomes essential. Unlike some other computers which look super-fast-smashing but take a degree in Applied Engineering and a large bank balance to upgrade, the PCW is a kitten. A B: drive will cost you around £115 (plus VAT) and fitting it merely requires a cross-head (Philips) screwdriver, some patience and a little time. Once the additional drive is in place, you will have the ability to store up to 706k of information on one disc. You will be able to store large databases, dictionaries and possibly a good sized novel.

By the way, when you read that a new B: FD4 drive is capable of holding 1 megabyte (1024k) of memory, this actually means unformatted. A formatted disc, with a directory area, will give you the 706k of data storage. So now, without further ado, here's how to fit it.

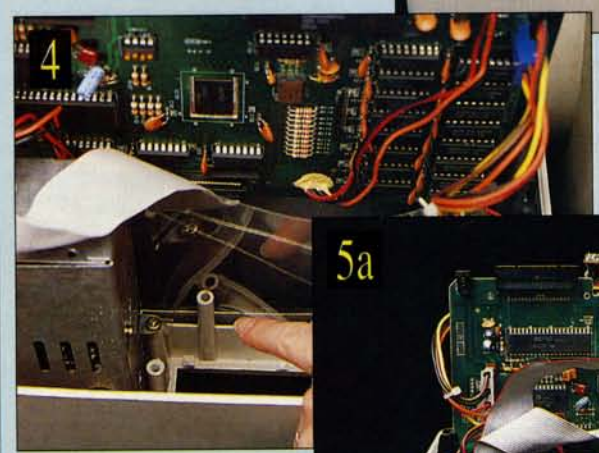
1 Before removing the back of the machine, disconnect it from the mains. Please refer to the previous page for details. Hold back with the screwdriver. You will need to remove the covering and plastic protector from the lower drive casing. The sticky metal covering can be prised off with a sharp knife (and then recycled to make some exotic jewellery). Then we reach the most irritating part of the whole procedure. The protective piece needs to be cut away from the casing by cutting through the six securing nodules. These then need to be filed down leaving a smooth surround. If they are not, you will have trouble keeping the new drive flush with the casing.



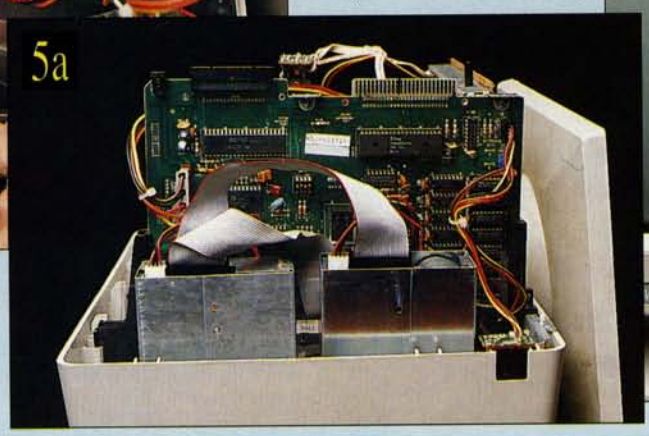
2 Tied together with a plastic loop are the two leads which you will need to connect the new drive. Snip the loop and free the leads. You will see a ribbon cable with a male connector and a four way lead (black and orange) with a white, four-pin plastic connector. The former is the vehicle for all the information while the latter is the power cable.



3 Look at your A: drive and note the orientation of the small plastic nodule in the middle of the large black connector (the one on the end of the grey ribbon-cable). The ribbon connector on your new B: drive should have its nodule facing in the same direction.



4 You will need to secure the drive in place. The best way to do this is to thread the three screws into the lugs provided on the side of the drive and then slot it place. Although there are six long, plastic tubes provided to affix the drive, you will only need to use three of them.



5a

5b

5 Once the drive has been secured all that is left is to make sure that it fits flush to the casing, refit the back of your PCW and away you go. By the way, before using the drive you will need to remove the card which is there to protect it while travelling.

One problem we had when fitting a new B: drive was the fact that the A: drive start-of-day disc we had been using corrupted when used to boot up the new system for the first time. This might be because we fitted the B: drive incorrectly (which, even though we say so ourselves is highly unlikely as the PCW is now working like a dream) It is more likely that there is some kind of power surge when booting for the first time. As always, make sure that you have backed up your start-of-day discs – that is to say that you have made copies of the copies of your master discs. Aside from this, the entire process should take you an hour. After this your PCW will be ready to do your bidding, faster and with greater capacity.

IT'S A RESCUE TAKE

The 9512 is a snob. For years it has refused to talk to the 8256. That is unless you have the 9512 Rescue Kit. Steve Mayer examines this peace-maker

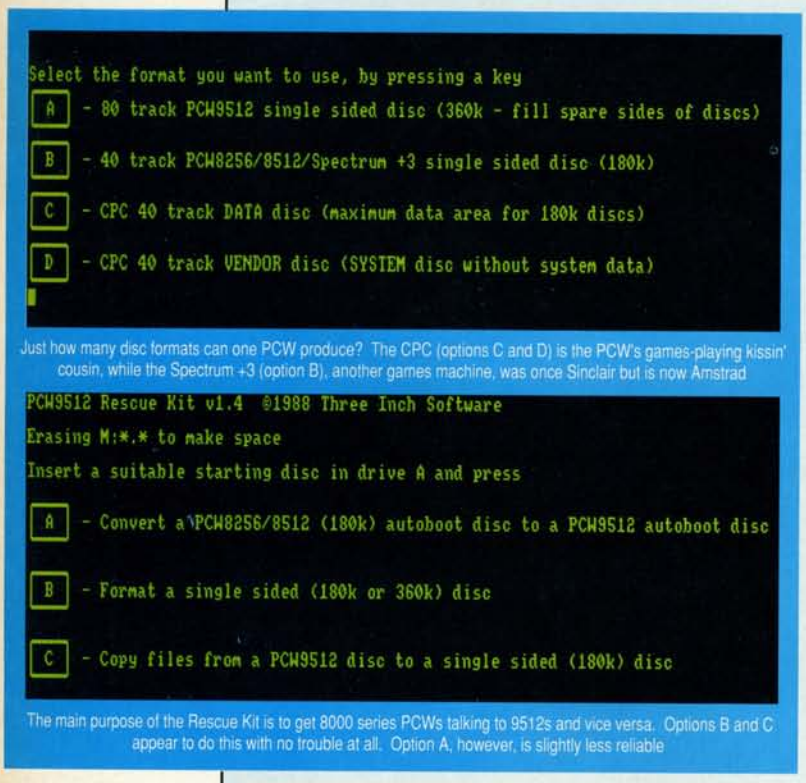
9512 RESCUE KIT

£9.95 ● Three Inch Software ● 01 5462754

The computer industry is often seen to revel in incompatible hardware and software and, unfortunately, Amstrad provide no exception. Not only are the PCW disc drives completely different from the rest of the computer world, but there are two different types. The 8256 and the A: drive of the 8512 read and write to discs which are single-sided, have 40 tracks on each side and a formatted capacity of 173k. On the other hand, the 9512 and B: drive of the 8512 use double-sided, 80 track discs with a storage capacity of 706k.

In fact even the other two machines in the world of computers which do use 3 inch drives won't pay heed to the PCW series without some effort. The CPC, which was the precursor of the PCW (and a games machine at heart) can be made to read PCW discs. The Spectrum +3, which was bought from Sir Clive Sinclair by Amstrad won't have anything to do with the PCW. Luckily both formats are catered for by the Rescue Kit. We quite happily read from a CPC Protext document.

8512 owners have the best of both worlds as they can use both types of disc. 9512 owners can read to both but can only write to the high-capacity, 80-track kind. The poor 8256 owner comes off worst only being able to use the low capacity discs.



Just how many disc formats can one PCW produce? The CPC (options C and D) is the PCW's games-playing kissin' cousin, while the Spectrum +3 (option B), another games machine, was once Sinclair but is now Amstrad

The main purpose of the Rescue Kit is to get 8000 series PCWs talking to 9512s and vice versa. Options B and C appear to do this with no trouble at all. Option A, however, is slightly less reliable

Not waving but drowning

But help is at hand – and you don't have to attach a new disc drive or buy an 8512. The Rescue Kit's prime attraction is that it enables the 9512 to format and write to low capacity discs which can be read by an 8256. In other words, it provides the missing half of the 8000 COPY utility which enables 8256 discs to be copied to 9512 format.

Rescue Kit is simplicity itself to use, presenting you with a menu at each stage. To copy a file from an 9512 disc to an 8256 disc, you choose this option from the menu and are then asked to name the file, which can include wildcards (*s and ?s). This means that any number of the files can be copied at once. You can then say whether you want to copy files from User group 0, exclude LocoScript Limbo files or copy everything to all groups. Apart from a prompt to change, that's all there is to it.

Unfortunately Rescue Kit fails to carry out any error checking. If you copy a file of the same name and group onto an 8256 which contains a file of the specifications, you get a real mess with both of them mixed up together. No, you can't delete the original one first as there's no erase file facility included. Worse still, if the disc is write-protected, the PCW goes into a sulk from which it won't emerge until you re-boot it.

F A B Mr Tracy

Rescue Kit does provide a couple of other useful facilities. It will format discs in lots of ways, allowing them to be read by the Amstrad CPC or Spectrum (Amstrad) +3 computers. It will even allow you to format one side of a disc with 40 tracks and the other with 80 tracks.

The final utility enables some programs written for the 8256 to be run on the 9512. The ones which often cause problems are those which write to the disc or which auto-boot (load by simply inserting them into the drive when switching on). Rescue Kit will try to convert this type of program so that it works on the 9512.

The notes accompanying Rescue Kit warn that success is not guaranteed as the program could run on modified CP/M or could be write protected. We tried it with two auto-booting games and on CP/M start-up disc, none of which worked, so it looks as if they are right!

The SOS banned

Rescue Kit is itself write-protected so you can't make a back-up. Clearly piracy is always a problem. But it is not a comforting experience to have to use the master disc. However, Three Inch Software will replace a faulty disc.

As far as the accompany documentation is concerned – it's all on disc. It does tend to repeat itself, which is no bad thing and there is plenty of it.

Generally then, if you don't want to spend around £120 upgrading your 8256 but need to use a 9512 as well, the 9512 Rescue Kit might serve your purposes. ■

9512 RESCUE KIT

Pluses	Minuses
▲ Easy to use	▼ No error checking
▲ Lots of disc formats	▼ Can't make back-up

RANGE OF FEATURES	4/5	EASE OF USE	4/5
PERFORMANCE	3/5	DOCUMENTATION	4/5
8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT			15/20

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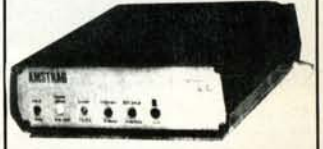

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MEET FELIX!

Pete Gerrard reviews another handy little utility for you and your PCW

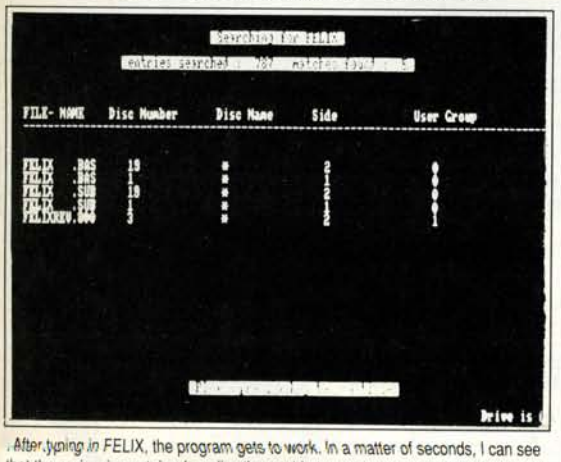
FELIX

£26.95 ● Amstrad Professional User Group ● 091 510 8787

If you are looking for a program file which could be on any one of 26 discs, you will usually find it after you have typed DIR 52 times. To make matters worse, it is also quite possible that the program will have been stored in group one, which is not ordinarily revealed by a simple DIR search, and so you would have to venture into LocoScript and wear out the writing on the F1/F2 key by continually pressing it when you change discs.

Faced with this perennial computing problem, an engaging chap called Robert Milne decided to write a program called Felix, which is short for the Filename and Extension Lister and IndeXer, alias Felix The Cataloguer. Judging by the telephone conversation that I had with him, he probably wrote the program while escaping from a daughter who seemingly never stops watching videos of the antics of the Neighbours from Ramsey Street. Kylie and Jason's loss is our gain, for this is an admirable computer product.

The extensive range of available options is shown here, ranging from searching on a whole file name to searching on just a fragment of it. I know the FELIX review is somewhere but I'm not quite sure where, so let's search for FELIX.



After typing in FELIX, the program gets to work. In a matter of seconds, I can see that the review is contained on disc three, side two, group one, and that for once I have made a backup copy of a backup copy!

BASIC listings

There was a minor worry to begin with when I found that I couldn't copy the master disc using the CP/M utility known as DISCKIT. Being the sort of person who is loath to use a master disc at any time, I resorted to LocoScript and copied the files individually, hidden ones and ordinary ones alike. Onto this new copy, you are advised to store some CP/M utilities and, if you've got room, BASIC as well. I soon found that BASIC had to go, and we'll see why later.

The first time you use the program, it is simply a matter of entering BASIC and running Felix. There are three options available from the first menu that appears, and these are to quit, use something called File Finder, or enter what is termed the Catalogue Builder. There is no point in choosing anything yet, and pressing C takes you to another menu. Here you can sort things out so that they are best suited to your computer system, be it an ordinary 8256, an 8512, a 9512, or anything in-between. The manual explains everything in a cheerful sort of way, so even the novice shouldn't encounter any problems when configuring a system for the first time.

Now we're coming to the main point of the program, which is to build up an index of all the files on all your discs. The Jetsam filing system is used, which means that all operations are carried out at lightning speed.

Number those discs

Being a humble 8256 owner, I altered nothing and proceeded to wend my merry way through the program. Felix assumes that all your discs are numbered, and after asking you to choose which group file areas you want to use (0 to 15 are available, but I never put anything on a group further on than group 3, so 0 to 3 was my choice) you are politely told to insert disc number one. Both sides are catalogued and all the files picked up, and then it's on to disc number two. I ended up using 10 discs on the first run and then came back at a later date to add another 10 discs. All are now labelled with numbers from 1 to 20.

Now we can use the File Finder option that I mentioned earlier. There are many ways of looking for a file. You can enter a whole name, the part before the dot or the part after the dot (as in BASIC.COM, so you could search for BASIC.COM, BASIC or COM), or, most useful of all, just a fraction of a file name. Suppose I was looking for this review after writing it and then going off and doing something else, so that I could print it out. I know it's on one of the 20 discs somewhere, I know I put REV in the title as a short-hand for REVIEW, but I can't remember the full name. No matter, just instruct Felix to search for all the files containing the three letters REV somewhere in their name.

File-finder

Seconds later, I am told that the Felix review is contained in group 1, side 2 of disc 3, and my days of spending more time than necessary searching through an endless array of discs in order to find a file are numbered. Providing, that is, that you remember to copy your index from where it is stored on drive M over to drive A before switching off the computer! There's a utility to help you.

Having now used the program extensively, and altered the files on some discs and added others to the list, I can only find two flaws. One is that there isn't a printout option for a permanent reference, and the other is that storing 20 discs takes up 78K for my 787 files. This is a lot of memory, and will mean that more than one disc will have to used in order to store all my information. A small price to pay for what is a great time-saver. Well done, Felix! ■

FELIX

Pluses	Minuses
▲ Great time saver	▼ Eats memory
▲ Good, friendly manual	▼ No printout feature
▲ Well thought-out product	▼ Bit pricey

EASE OF USE 4/5 PERFORMANCE 4/5
DOCUMENTATION 4/5
8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT 12/15

BOOK LOOK

Sophie Lankenau leafs her way through the latest volumes of PCW wisdom

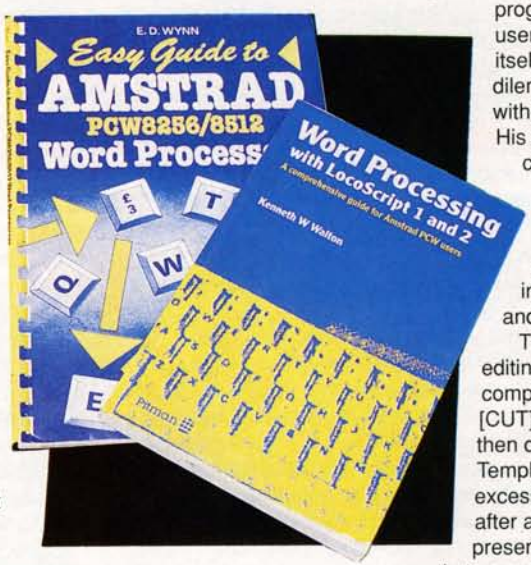
EASY GUIDE TO AMSTRAD PCW 8256/8512 WORD PROCESSORS

by E D Wynn

£6.50 ● Edward Arnold ● 0732 450111

Here is an author who really has the interests of any willing student at heart. A ring-bound (or 'plastic comb coil' if you want to impress publishers at parties) booklet is an utter godsend for someone trying to divide their time equally between reading and implementing instructions. There are few things more frustrating than leaping unceremoniously from How to Load a Disc to The Potential of an Interface with one careless slip of an overworked paperweight.

Having established the easy way to open Eileen Wynn's Easy Guide to Amstrad Word Processors, you can then set about getting to grips with the subject matter. Rather than devote a chapter to explaining rudimentary facts about your machine, Wynn jumps straight in with details of its manipulation. This is somewhat discouraging for the novice, who, expecting an 'Easy Guide' is suddenly faced with jargon which is enough to send the budding word processing expert hurtling back to their typewriter. Providing they don't, and take the time to read the text through, a pleasant surprise is in store.



The learning process with this step by step instruction manual comes about by repetition of terminology, coupled with bracketed explanations of what it actually means. This method eventually works. In Wynn's book however, you aren't cossetted for long – as the chapters advance, the friendly brackets retreat to be replaced by occasional prompts as to why you are doing what you are being told to do.

The exercises which you carry out are thorough without being lengthy. You move swiftly along, ironing out any queries by quick cross-reference to earlier sections. Nearly every page features a visual representation of the effects which your actions are achieving – or should be – so mistakes are easy to spot.

The amount of input which you have to perform, in the shape of letters, memos and so on, is a useful way to familiarise your fingers with the speed of the keyboard, adjusting them from the more rigid feel of the typewriter key.The joys of the delete [DEL] keys can then be fully appreciated. Although the guide is directed at both the PCW8526 and the PCW8512, the section dedicated to the latter is brief – but no less informative, if you've taken in a sufficient percentage of the book so far. It is at this point that you are considered both able and interested enough to be privy to all those handy labour-saving ways of operating the program via the ruthless dispensing of the main menu in favour of using the [+] and [–] commands.

The key to getting the most out of Eileen Wynn's guide lies in pure determination and persistence. There is something very encouraging about a user guide which is so slim in terms of volume. When you also have the good fortune to find a no-nonsense account of how to make your machine work for you, a once daunting task disappears . ■

ISBN 0 7131 3662 6

8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT 3/5

WORD PROCESSING WITH LOCOSCRIPT 1 AND 2

by Kenneth Walton

£6.95 ● Pitman Publishing ● 01 3797383

Kenneth Walton has placed himself in something of an unenviable position by producing this, his third publication on the versions of LocoScript. Here, his chief concern is to demonstrate the programs' practical applications, rather than a user's crib to understanding the software itself. But he still has to allow for the perpetual dilemma of explaining the subject matter without confusing or patronising the reader. His solution is workable – a brief introductory chapter ensures that you remember what a disc is, the meanings behind terms such as RAM (Ramdom Access Memory) and CPU (Central Processing Unit), and what to expect when you insert said disc into the machine. It is short, unintrusive, and comforting.

The book opens with an explanation of editing documents, incorporating text composition and alteration, and [CUT],[COPY],[PASTE] techniques. The tutorial then devotes four chapters to the principles of Templates and Layouts. This might seem excessive until you remember that LocoScript is, after all, a program renowned for being able to present the written word on the finished page the way that you want comparatively easily.

Mid-way through the book, there is a compact summary of the tutorial to date. Even if you have read your stuff thoroughly up to this point, the precis is a very welcome refresher, ensuring that you can go on to tackle future information with a more than reasonable command of the basics.

As if by reward, the middle section is dedicated to the printer, so that you can transform the fruits of your study to paper. Every conceivable printer application is dealt with, enabling you to match your particular needs to the possibilities which the machine offers.

Walton uses screenshots with economy – perhaps a disadvantage for the complete beginner, but then the guide is not for the totally uninitiated. The neat organisation of the chapters into manageable sub-sections, and the clarity of explanation make the need for visual backup almost redundant.

Thus far, the book has concerned itself with LocoScript 1.The section on LocoScript 2 follows a similar format, highlighting details on the benefits of the latest version. Again, there is a hefty chunk given over to – yes, you guessed it, Templates and Layouts – and a repeat of the concise 'Summary' chapter as with LocoScript 1.

As in the previous case, the tutorial is designed to complement rather than replace the Manual. However, the section on LocoScript 2 is far more limited, and you would be unwise to tackle it without having fully absorbed section one.

Despite this minor criticism, Walton's guide excels in its adherence to the promise which the Preface offers – to clarify the 'hows' and 'whys' of word processing with both versions of LocoScript. ■

ISBN NUMBER 0 273 03088 4

8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT 4/5

CAREERING ALONG

How do you get a job working with computers? Annette Dougal, a computer professional, tells you all about IT

There are hundreds of different jobs available in the computer world, but they can be grouped into three main areas: the manufacture of hardware, the provision of software, and computer operation itself. There are jobs dealing directly with computers, in design, production, servicing, programming and sales, as well as many jobs providing backup services such as training, technical writing, journalism, marketing and consultancy.

If you want a career in the computer industry, what qualifications and personal qualities do you need? Computers are everywhere. They control production lines and stock levels, produce invoices and airline tickets, analyse test results and market trends. And, with new applications being developed every day, these markets show no signs of slowing down.

This rapid increase in the use of computer-related technology has resulted in a shortage of skilled staff in almost all areas. The shortfall in trained workers is due to get worse and is exacerbated by the declining number of young people entering the job market. By the middle of the 1990s, there will be about a million fewer school leavers. In addition, the continuing scarcity of qualified Maths and Physics teachers in schools will mean fewer science graduates, one of the industry's traditional sources of recruitment.

These problems could not come at a worse time for UK companies. The arrival of the free European market in 1992 will mean firms will be requiring more skilled labour than ever before in order to remain competitive. Bad news, indeed, for industry, but good news for computer professionals.

Loadsa money

A sure sign of the skills shortage is the number of computer recruitment agencies springing up. Part of the problem is that companies are unwilling, or unable, to train staff from scratch in the high-level skills they require. As firms poach each others' trained staff, salaries are pushed up even higher.

What kind of money are we talking about? Exact figures will vary depending on local conditions with salaries in the South East of England being about 25% higher than the national average. A trainee programmer could earn around £10,000 rising to £13,000 after two years and £15-£18,000 after five years. An electronics engineering graduate could earn between £9,000 and £13,000 to start, rising to £13-£18,000 after two years and £20-£25,000 after five years.

With 18 months' to two years' programming experience, you could take your pick of jobs. If you want to be your own boss, there are plenty of opportunities for freelance work at about £500 per week. With the right skills and three or four years' experience, a good systems programmer could earn £1,000 a week in the South East.

But how do you get your foot on the career ladder? I asked four young computer specialists about their backgrounds and for their advice to would-be fellow professionals about breaking into the market.

Small STEPS for mankind

If you want to convert to engineering but don't have Maths or Science 'A' levels, you can take Special Technology and Engineering Preparatory Studies (STEPS) courses, lasting two, rather than four, years at some universities.

The soft option

Ben Dillistone has been working for Praxis Systems PLC as a software engineer (programmer) since 1987. After Maths, Physics and Chemistry 'A' levels, Ben read Computer Science at York University, then spent a further two years there as part of a research team. This "fairly theoretical work" provided him with "a good learning experience", but, feeling it was time to "write real programs for real people", he joined Praxis.

Ben is anxious to dispel the myth that programmers sit all day hunched over a keyboard. "In fact, writing programs is a small part of any project, just one of three roughly equal phases: specification, implementation and, finally, testing and documenting the product."

Ben specialises in relational databases. He spent a year working on a system to store and assess GCSE exam results for the Northern Examining Association and is currently working on another large database application. As well as being a technical expert on ORACLE, he is responsible for the company's graduate recruitment.

My way

Another widespread myth is that good programmers are computer junkies who only communicate with others through electronic mail. In fact, they have to talk to clients and usually work in a team, so they have to get on well with other people. They need excellent communications skills as well as technical know-how. Because of this, Ben does not believe that the route he followed is the best way into programming. "A computer science degree can be rather narrow. If I was starting again, I would take an Arts degree and then either find a software house prepared to train me, or take a one year computer conversion course.

"There are three main areas of employment for programmers: manufacturers of computer hardware and software, data-processing departments and software houses. Manufacturers pay well, with starting salaries for computer science graduates of up to £16,000, but you'll have to work extremely hard for it and there is a danger of pigeon-holing, finding yourself limited to a particular product range. The data-processing department of a large organisation makes for a safe, but possibly dull, existence, with technology five to ten years behind the industry. Software houses provide a challenging and stimulating environment in which to work."

After three years, Ben still enjoys his job. "The work is technically challenging. I would certainly recommend it. Computers are going to make a dramatic difference to people's lives. This is an excellent time to get into the industry."

Programmer Ben Dillistone is a high earner and, above all, a man who loves his work

S/he sells C shells?

Without sales there would be no business. Computer manufacturers do not usually sell direct to the public, but through dealers. Robert Read is a Product Manager for Dewco-mce Computer Services Ltd, a Bristol-based dealer. He did not go straight into sales. When he left school after 'A' levels, not wanting to go to university, Robert worked for a year as a computer client clerk with Tate and Lyle, sending 'Picking lists' from Bristol to a mainframe computer in London via a modem. In 1983 he joined Dewco-mce as Manager of their new showroom. During the next two years, he learned as much as he could about the company's products and received sales training before joining the sales team.

About a third of Robert's time is spent in the office, following leads, sending out and chasing up quotations and dealing with paperwork. The rest of the week he meets potential clients, conducts demonstrations, and visits corporate customers to generate new and repeat business. He really enjoys his work. "I like meeting people and getting over to them the product I'm selling. I enjoy seeing the light in people's eyes when they realise how much this tool will help them with their job.

Robert Read, "I like meeting people and getting over the product I'm selling"

"To be a successful computer salesperson, you don't have to have a degree or even 'A' levels, but you do need a good standard of education, with English GCSE of help. You also need a competent and genuine telephone manner with good communications skills for dealing with clients. Smart dress is required and enthusiasm for and knowledge of your product range. Training in sales techniques will usually be provided."

Nice little earner

Computer sales people tend to be in their 20s and 30s, both male and female. The earnings potential is massive. Salespeople are usually paid a basic salary, plus commission based on their performance. A company car normally goes with the job. "Expect a starting basic salary of about £6,000. But once you've built up your customer base, you could easily double your salary. My advice? Build up your product and customer knowledge. Learn everything you can about the system and the people to whom you will be selling it."

To help you decide whether you are interested in sales, programming, technical support or training, Robert recommends taking a computer course at a technical college, particularly one which involves work experience. To get into sales, approach companies direct. "After all, if you can sell yourself to them, you can sell their products to others!"

DAT'll be the day

Tracey Hains and James Harrison are two of Hewlett Packard's Research and Development Engineers on its Digital Audio Tape (DAT) project. Tracey works on firmware, "the embedded software that controls the function of hardware". She has spent a year refining the format for DAT and represents the company on an international level. James is part of the hardware team and is in charge of five engineers, "co-ordinating their efforts to ensure that the hardware is fully functional and reliable".

After Science 'A' levels, Tracey found Maths "too abstract" and so went on to read Computer Science with Mathematics at Bristol University, gaining a First. She decided to deal with firmware because "writing COBOL programs didn't sound interesting. I enjoy designing something and seeing it work, seeing the wheels turn. There is a lot of variation in the work, lots of opportunity to travel and meet people. I like working in a new and exciting field, at the forefront of technology."

James also took Science 'A' levels, then chose a degree at Bristol University in Electrical and Electronics Engineering, specialising in digital electronics. "I could see a use for it. With the micro processor being developed at that time, most advances were being made in that field. Something new was happening all the time." He was sponsored by the electronics company RACAL, who employed him for a year before university, and during vacations, as well as paying him during the course and guaranteeing a job on graduation. Working in all the company's departments, from production to accounts, "was very, very useful, seeing how the company functioned and where all the departments fitted in."

Wanting to work in a commercial environment, James joined Hewlett Packard. Like Tracey, he enjoys the practical nature of electronic design. "I like starting with a blank sheet of paper and ending up with a solid piece of equipment, which you can turn on and will work, knowing you have designed a good product, which is reliable and cost effective."

The quickest way to secure a career in electronic engineering is to take Science 'A' levels, followed by a degree, preferably one involving a sizeable practical project. James feels that taking a year out before going to University or Polytechnic "leads to a more mature approach and makes it easier to select options. It also provides you with a background for the job."

Work experience during your degree is also recommended, either through a sandwich course or through vacation jobs offering computer experience. Find out if sponsorship is available. A longer route would be to get BTEC/SCOTVEC qualifications at your local technical college, start with a firm as a technician, take day release courses and work your way up to engineering.

According to Tracey, "to be a good engineer, you need patience, an inquiring mind and determination." James agrees, adding, "... you need to be prepared to be flexible as things change rapidly. You need to be able to stand back and take a look at your design objectively. You must grasp information quickly. You need a good, analytical mind, constantly gathering the relevant data, looking at the problem, reviewing it, trying new ideas. You should enjoy problem solving and take a structured approach."

Would they recommend the job? "Certainly. The people are good and the pay's good! Everyone is reporting a shortage of engineers, so salaries are rising. There are always going to be good jobs for engineers."

Tracey Hains found Maths "too abstract" and now represents her company on international boards

James Harrison: "I like working in a new and exciting field at the forefront of technology."

Courses for older horses

High Technology National Training Courses provide specialised training, mainly in computer-related subject areas, often leading to a post graduate qualification, Higher National Diploma (HND) or Higher National Certificate (HNC). These are government-funded and replace the old TOPS scheme.

Out of this world

If you are unemployed, the Employment Training (ET) programme offers people from 18 to 60 up to a year's full-time training, including real work experience. Ask at your local Job Centre.

Careers woman

Angeline Rogers, a Careers Officer with the County of Avon Careers Service, talked to me about computer opportunities in schools and offered her advice to parents with children who are interested in a computing career.

"The school typing class used to be a female domain. Not any more! If possible, help your child develop good keyboard skills. After all, the less you have to look at the keys, the more you can concentrate on what you are trying to make happen on the screen.

"Science subjects and maths have traditionally been considered important for computing, but good communication skills are highly rated by employers, so don't ignore English. Also, learning a foreign language is an excellent training for learning a computer language and, with 1992 on the horizon, should be a great asset.

Angelina Rogers: "Careful guidance is important"

"When it comes to choosing a career, pupils should discuss the options with the careers teacher, if there is one, or the careers officer who visits the school. Does your child enjoy taking machinery apart and rebuilding it, or like writing games and other programs? Outside interests and hobbies should be taken into account as well as academic ability. Careful guidance is most important, so consult your local careers adviser."

Your flexible friend

Access courses are for people who missed out on getting formal qualifications at school and want to return to study. These one year full-time courses run at local colleges of further education and often feed directly into Polytechnic courses. Discretionary grants may be available. Contact your local Further Education college.

Many colleges run full and part-time day and evening courses, covering all aspects of computing and leading to RSA, City and Guilds and BTEC/SCOTVEC qualifications. Polytechnics run full and part-time courses leading to HNDs, BAs or BScs in computer related subjects. Many colleges now run Open Learning Centres, where you can drop in and study a chosen subject at a time convenient to yourself.

A computer operator is, traditionally, the person responsible for running a mainframe or mini computer. He or she loads tapes and discs, controls the sequence of work, monitors the programs, checks printers, maintains logs and carries out routine maintenance. The work is often carried out in shifts, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Mainframe or mini computer operators require at least GCSEs, including Maths and English, and often 'A' levels.

Smooth operator

Micro computers are now widespread, with business systems using standard software packages to carry out many office tasks. They are also used increasingly as technical or commercial tools, for computer aided design, mathematical simulations, business or economic modelling.

Communications and networking represent an area of rapid growth. A micro computer operator could be someone running any one of a dozen applications: payroll, stock control, production scheduling, financial analysis, word processing and so on. The computer could just as easily be in a laboratory, shop, warehouse or factory as in an office.

The qualifications needed to be a micro computer operator will vary according to the job. Visual Display Unit (VDU) operators require manual dexterity and accuracy. Word processor operators should have good secretarial skills while desktop publishing operators need a flair for graphic design. GCSEs will help get a job in micro computer operating, as will enthusiasm, reliability and a willingness to learn new skills. Many companies will provide training in specific applications.

Quo vadis?

Choose a college course in a relevant subject or one which includes computer experience. Economics, languages and business studies are all highly regarded by prospective employers. Many computer jobs demand excellent social and communications skills. All require the ability to work on your own initiative and as part of a team.

Local employment and training opportunities vary, so get advice from your local careers officers. Ask about YTS (where appropriate) and NCC Threshold courses and find out what else is available at colleges of further education in your area. Look out for advertisements in the local press and write directly to the personnel departments of computer-using firms. You can find out relevant addresses from the *Computer Users' Year Book*, a copy of which should be available at your main public library.

The computer industry at home and abroad offers challenging work at all levels. As the market continues to expand, with rapid developments, particularly in telecommunications, information technology is changing the face of the workplace. This fast-moving and dynamic industry will continue to provide excellent career opportunities in the future. You, your children or even your children's children can be part of Information Technology (IT)!

Useful addresses for further information

British Computer Society
13 Mansfield Street
London W1M 0BP
Tel: 01 637 0471

National Computing Centre
Oxford Road
Manchester M1 7ED
Tel: 061 228 6333

High Technology National Training
Dept HTNT, The Training Agency
FREEPOST (TK 895), Brentford,
Middlesex TW8 8BR
Tel: 0800 444 245

University degrees:

University Central Council for Admissions (UCCA)
PO Box 28, Cheltenham

CNAA (Polytechnic) Degrees

Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA)
344-354 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8BP

Regulatory bodies for computer courses:

City and Guilds of London Institute
76 Portland Place, London W1N 4AA

Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC)
Central House, Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0HH

Scottish Vocational Educational Council (SCOTVEC)
22 Great King Street, Edinburgh EH3 6QH

Royal Society of Arts (RSA)
John Adam Street, Adelphi, London WC2N 6EZ

Entry qualifications/duration of courses BTEC or SCOTVEC in Computer Studies

National Certificate
3-4 GCSEs
1 year full-time
2 years part-time

National Diploma
3-4 GCSEs
2 years full-time
3 years part-time

HNC
National Certificate or 1 'A' level
1 year full-time
3 years part-time

HNC Maths/Statistics/Computing
1 'A' level
2 years part-time

HND Maths/Statistics/Computing
1 'A' level
2 years full-time
3 years part-time

Degrees
2-3 'A' levels
3 years full-time (4 with industrial training)

Scotland:
3-4 Highers
4 years full-time
5 with industrial training

DISC DESIGN

FORMS BOX COMPENDIUM . 19.95
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FIFTHBASE2 . . . . . 19.95
The intelligent database. Especially good on question answering, with AND/OR logic. Also included - XBASE - the revolutionary database that communicates in English.

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Dozens of time saving programs. A few examples: Labels - address lists onto labels. File sorter - many options. Columns - converts text files to multi columns. Word sentence and letter counter. Matrix printer set up commands.

HYPERTEXT 19.95
Hypertext is a free flowing system that connects screens of information using associative links. Hypertext mimics the brain's ability to find and retrieve information quickly and easily by links between topics.

EXPERT SYSTEM 29.95
Expert System maintains a facts data-base and a stack of rules. Each rule consists of any number of stimulus elements, which specify the facts which have to be true before the rule can fire; and any number of commands or assertions which are implemnted when the rule fires. The assertions alter the facts data-base.

TEXTBASE 19.95
Textbase makes a database of already existing (ASCII) files. It has a number of modules that can either be used from the Textbase Menu or used separately as self-contained programs.

SECURITY 19.95
A system for coding, decoding and viewing confidential text and other files. The files are protected from prying eyes by a key word or key phrase that can be up to 255 characters.

SUPASTAT 19.95
A collection of statistical programs and facilities that runs under Mallard basic - very easy to use.

INTRASET

CASHMASTER 29.95
CASHMASTER is designed as a more powerful, flexible and easy to use accounting system, than its rivals. Its much cheaper too.

POOLSMASTER 18.95
At long last there is a simple, easy to use and effective computer program to Predict the FOOTBALL POOLS.

COURSEMASTER 18.95
BEAT THE BOOKIE!
The COURSEMASTER racing program is designed to give you the edge to profit against your bookie!

SPA Associates

PCW MACHINE CODE 13.95
A practical guide to controlling PCW's by MACHINE CODE PROGRAMMING

WADD SOFT

WRITE RIGHT 14.95
We are pleased to re-introduce this very popular program to improve the student's use of the English language. Now further improved and enlarged.

CF2 DISCS
BUY DIRECT FROM THE SPECIALISTS!

TYPE 1
Made in Japan by MATSUSHITA(PANASONIC)
Black disc with square cross-hatching, serial numbered on end between white pull-out write protect tabs.
● SUITABLE FOR ALL PCW's ●

PANASONIC CF2
Individual polythene sleeves - with labels & instruction sheets
19.95 for 10
(10.95 for 5)
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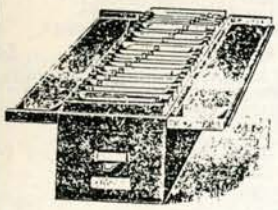

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LISTINGS

A guest appearance from a Locomotive, terminal programming and how to check it's all okay

NEWCHAR.BAS

by Richard Clayton

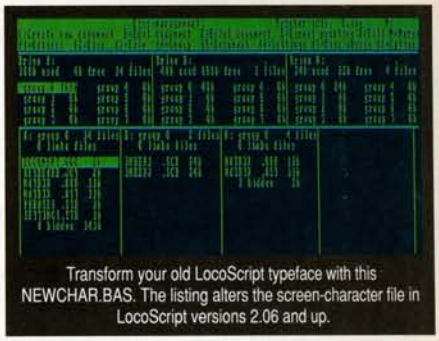
You may have heard the name Richard Clayton bandied around the pages of 8000 Plus in the past. This is because Richard is the Technical Director of Locomotive Software, the creators of the LocoScript family of programs. You may also have heard of the impending release of LocoScript for the PC.

Well, for LocoScript PC, Locomotive have redesigned their screen character shapes to make them look better. In particular they are rather more finely drawn. The PCW uses a rather chunky screen font with 'thick' verticles which are two dots (pixels) wide. If, however, you'd like to experiment with thinner characters on your PCW this April, then Richard's listing will transform your characters into a slim-line version of themselves. As a bonus the program will optionally slant them to the right in an italic style, just in case your monitor is on a wonky table which slants to the left.

The program works by processing one of LocoScript 2's hidden files, SCRCHAR.JOY to be exact. This contains the screen character shapes. Unfortunately PCW8000 owners still using LocoScript 1 or LocoScript 2.00 ... 2.06 don't have this file – they must upgrade to a modern version of the software ... plug, plug!)

The first step is to MAKE A COPY of your start-of-day disc. Not merely your master-disc but a copy of the copy. This is just in case something goes wrong with the file. Once you have typed in the listing make sure you have the copy of your start-of-day disc in drive A: then run the program. Answer Y if you want thin characters and Y if you also want italic (or indeed Y to both questions). Then sit back and wait a few seconds while your SCRCHAR.JOY file is transformed. Re-boot LocoScript and appreciate the new shapes.

If you want to experiment further, you can alter the program as you wish. It comes in three parts – the first constructs a transformation array (X) which is what makes the characters thin. The second part processes the characters, applying the transformation and slanting them if the italic option was requested. The third part fixes up some checksums in the file header without which LocoScript will reject the altered file.



Transform your old LocoScript typeface with this NEWCHAR.BAS. The listing alters the screen-character file in LocoScript versions 2.06 and up.

Finally, a note about character shape designs. These are highly protected pieces of intellectual property – and their names are jealously guarded. Helvetica (a rather thin typestyle) will often be called 'Swiss' or 'Geneva' by people who have designed their own Helvetica style but don't want to purchase the rights to the Helvetica name. For the thin style which is produced by this listing Richard decided against picking another Swiss town but instead to dub it Wellington. You can think of this as the font which is used at boot up time!

```
10 REM NEWCHAR.BAS BY RICHARD CLAYTON                          1408
20 OPTION RUN                                                  0732
30 cls$=CHR$(27)+"E"+CHR$(27)+"H":PRINT cls$                   10DC
40 DEF FNat$(x,y)=CHR$(27)+"Y"+CHR$(32+x)+CHR$(32+y)           133E
50 PRINT CHR$(27)+"f":DEFINT A-Z                               0DA4
60 INPUT "TYPE Y FOR ITALICS";Y$:ITAL=UPPER$(Y$)="Y"           1B14
70 INPUT "TYPE Y FOR THIN";Y$: THIN=UPPER$(Y$)="Y"             19C7
80 PRINT cls$                                                  0630
90 DIM X(255)                                                  0541
100 FOR J=0 TO 255                                             072B
110 PRINT FNat$(10,25);"Please wait until "J" = 255"           15C9
120 X(J)=J:IF NOT THIN THEN 190                                0E5F
130 FOR K=0 TO 6                                               06A5
140 L=2^K:REM ^ is the power operator                          1393
150 IF (J AND (L*7)=(L*3)) THEN X(J)=X(J)-L*2                  10F1
160 IF (J AND (L*7)=(L*2)) THEN X(J)=X(J)-L                    106B
170 NEXT K                                                     047D
180 PRINT TAB(25);SPACE$(11)                                   0BF6
190 NEXT J                                                     0481
200 PRINT FNat$(10,25); "     CONVERSION STARTING          "   1690
```

All the infantry such as clear screen and kill-the-cursor routines are set up here. While debugging it is a good idea to REM line 20. The (X) array is dimensioned in line 90

```
210 F$="SCRCHAR.JOY"                                              0908
220 IF FIND$(F$)="" THEN PRINT "Missing";F$:STOP                  15F9
230 OPEN "R",#1,F$,8:FIELD #1,8 AS A$                             0BCD
240 FOR R=17 TO 512-16                                            0890
250 GET #1,R:B$=""                                                0652
```

The legwork is done here. Your copy of SCRCHAR.JOY is opened and read into memory beginning in line 230. The loop in line 240 does the reading.

```
260 FOR K=1 TO 8                                                  06BF
270 B=ASC(MID$(A$,K,1)):C=X(B)                                    0B4C
280 IF NOT ITAL THEN 320                                          0A9C
290 FOR M=1 TO (7-K)/2                                            081F
300 IF (C AND 1)=0 THEN C=C/2 ELSE C=((C-1)/2) OR 1               128F
310 NEXT M                                                        0473
320 B$=CHR$(C)+B$:D!=D!+C-B                                       08A3
330 NEXT K                                                        0475
340 LSET A$=B$:PUT #1,R                                           095E
350 IF (R MOD 16) <> 0 THEN 370                                   0A00
360 PRINT FNat$(12,25);"Counting down from"; 31-R/16;CHR$(13)     1AD5
370 NEXT R                                                        048F
380 FIELD #1, 1 AS A$, 2 AS K$, 4 AS A$,1 AS Z$                   0F94
```

The loop which begins in line 260 actually controls the whole process and must be typed in exactly otherwise dire consequences might well ensue.

```
390 FIELD #1, 1 AS A$, 1 AS A$, 1 AS B$                           0C3D
400 GET #1, 13: H=ASC(A$)+ASC(B$):D!=CVI(K$)+D!                   1093
410 IF D!>+32767 THEN D!=D!-65536!:GOTO 410                       0F98
420 IF D!<-32768! THEN D!=D!+65536!:GOTO 420                      1029
430 LSET K$=MKI$(D!):H=ASC(A$)+ASC(B$)-H                          10A9
440 PUT #1,13:GET #1,16                                           08ED
450 LSET Z$=LEFT$(MKI$(UNT(ASC(Z$)+H)),1)                         11DC
460 PUT #1,16:CLOSE #1                                            08FC
470 PRINT CHR$(27)+"e";cls$                                       0A13
480 PRINT FNat$(10,25);" Job Done - End of Chat ":END             15BE
```

The new file is created, note the tidy FIELD operations in lines 380-390. The MKI$ function in line 430 converts strings to integers.

CHECK3.BAS

by Adrian Wilkins & Peter Crane

The last time we published our checksum program was in October last year, six months ago. So, the time has come to bring back the old favourite for all of the readers we've gained since then.

The listings we publish every month are printed with four-figure hexidecimal numbers at the end of each line. These are the checksum digits produced by good old Check2. Once you have typed the listing(s) in, you run the check program all you have to do then is match the numbers you get to those printed in the magazine.

This new version differs in superficial aspects to its forebear. It will produce a file which can be saved (normally with the suffix .CHK). It prints to the screen as well as giving you the option of creating 'hard copy' on your printer. The guts of the program are the same, and the the hex numbers generated will not differ from those produced by CHECK2.BAS.

CHECK3 gives TERMINAL.BAS a good seeing to. The four figure numbers (yes in computer land, letters can be numbers) are hexidecimal.

```
10 INPUT "Program name   ",prog$                                  0F21
20 IF INSTR(prog$,".") = 0 THEN prog$=prog$+".bas"                14D8
30 IF FIND$(prog$)="" THEN PRINT "Program not found":PRINT:GOTO 10 21FD
40 OPEN "I",1,prog$                                               07B0
50 INPUT "name of file to write to";prog2$                        16A3
60 INPUT "Send to printer Y/N";ask$                               11A3
70 IF UPPER$(ask$)="Y" THEN prt%=1                                0F96
80 IF prog$ ="" THEN END                                          0A0D
```

Which program do you want checked? Whatever it is, make sure that you have saved it in ASCII form! If the file is found, line 90 opens it.

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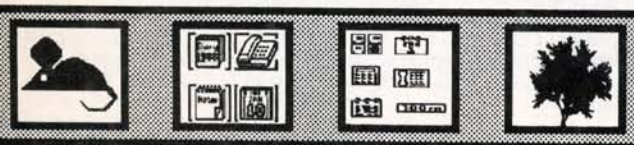

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```
90 OPEN "O",2,prog2$                                                    0817
100 WHILE NOT EOF(1)                                                    0928
110 LINE INPUT #1,z$                                                    08A7
120 y$=UPPER$(z$)                                                       05F8
130 check%=0 : j%=0                                                     06BA
140 FOR i% = 1 TO LEN(y$)                                               09BB
150 y%=ASC(MID$(y$,i%,1)) : IF y%=32 GOTO 200                           1068
160 IF y% <> &HFC GOTO 180                                              0A66
170 PRINT "Save it in b**** ASCII!" : END                               11DC
180 j% = j% + 1                                                         02FE
190 check% = check% + (y%-32) * (j% MOD 7 +1)                           0E08
```

The main program loop is the WHILE ... WEND which is born in line 100. The EOF straightforwardly stands for End of FIle and until the end is reached the file will keep being read into memory.

```
200 NEXT                                                                0414
210 PRINT #2,z$;TAB(75);HEX$(check%,4)                                  0EB0
220 PRINT z$;TAB(75);HEX$(check%,4)                                     0F36
230 IF prt%=1 THEN LPRINT z$;TAB(75);HEX$(check%,4)                     1797
240 WEND                                                                03F7
250 CLOSE 1:CLOSE 2: PRINT "done"                                       1041
260 END                                                                 036F
```

The print out option is taken up here. Line 210 will tidily print z$ (the contents of the checked file) if you have so opted.

TERMINAL.BAS

by J M Crellin

For a while now, Listings Plus has been getting flak about printing too many games, fripperies and diversions and not enough technically angled programs. Well, TERMINAL.BAS aims to over-turn this state of affairs. In the words of the programmer himself,

"The listing is a simple terminal program, which logs the interaction to the M: disc. TERMINAL provides a few additional features over MAIL232.COM (which comes with LocoScript).

First it allows logging of any interaction and second it does not trap some of the command keys (for example [ALT]+Z) which are necessary for communicating with many other computers (VMS for example).

Changes to line 270 (removing the REM) would allow incoming data to be displayed as characters rather than ASCII codes (making control codes invisible).

TERMINAL.BAS can be useful when trying to work out why a comms link is not performing properly. Being a slow program it will not be able to cope with high baud rates but is should be reasonably reliable up to 300 baud.

I would see the main uses for TERMINAL being in debugging comms links and in interactive communications with another computer."

For the buffs amongst you here is the assembly language for the machine code routine set up in lines 40-100. This calls BDOS function 7 which checks the status of the input port.

This routine is a useful one for all BASIC programmers as it allows any BDOS functions to be called (provided it returns a result to register A).

This enables a programmer to reach the parts of Mallard BASIC never intended for exploration. Only the 7 in the first line need be changed to allow for different BDOS functions to be called. Lists of these functions can be found in Andrew Clarke and David Powys-Lybbe's book *'The Amstrad CP/M Plus'* (MML Systems, 11 Sun Street, London, EC2).

Assembly	Opcode	Definition
ld c, 7	14,7	Loads register C with number 7 which is the BDOS call.
call BDOS	S205,5,0	Calls BDOS
ld(addr),a	50,100,195	Loads the contents of register which is the result of BDOS call to a memory address
ret	201	Return to BASIC program

Here at 8000 Plus we were able to get an 8512 chatting away quite happily with the office Mac at 300 baud. The only problem was that no line breaks are signalled.

So, we hope that our more technically minded readers will be happy with this program. Any ideas about souping it up will of course be gratefully received.

```
10 REM **** TERMINAL PROGRAM ****                                       0EB0
20 REM ** (c) Jonathan Crellin **                                       0EA6
30 REM **** Set up Machine Code (BDOS Call No 7) ****                   15AA
40 CLEAR, 49999!                                                        0632
50 RESTORE                                                              057B
60 FOR n% = 0 TO 8                                                      0707
70  READ m%                                                             03D8
80  POKE (50000!+n%),m%                                                 0770
```

The machine code routine for BDOS call 7 is carried out in lines 40-100. It will " reach the parts of Mallard BASIC never intended!"

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```
90 NEXT n%                                                          04C7
100 DATA 14,7,205,5,0,50,100,195,201                                0A86
110 REM **** Initialise Screen and Log File ****                    15A4
120 PRINT CHR$(27)+"E"+CHR$(27)+"H"                                 0BB2
130 PRINT TAB(26)"---(Simple Terminal Program)---"                  16D3
140 PRINT                                                           046F
150 PRINT TAB(27)"(c) J.M.Crellin-December 1989"                    1509
160 PRINT                                                           0475
170 PRINT TAB(25)"Interaction is logged to M:TERMINAL.LOG:"         1E00
180 PRINT:PRINT TAB(30)" Press [EXIT] key to quit"                  1AEA
190 PRINT                                                           047E
200 OPEN "O",1,"M:TERMINAL.LOG"                                     0E53
210 REM **** Event Loop ****                                        0B71
220 WHILE k%<>27                                                    069C
230  z=50000!:CALL z                                               071B
```

The main event loop! This calls the machine code routine in line 230. It also checks to see if the number 255 is in a memory location. If so, there must be incoming data waiting.

```
240  WHILE PEEK(50020!)=255                                         0965
250   x%=INP(&HE0)                                                  060C
260   OUT &HE0, x%                                                  06EF
270   PRINT CHR$(x%);:PRINT #1 CHR$(x%);                            1040
280   REM PRINT x%;:PRINT #1 x%;                                    0E59
290   POKE(50020!),0                                                063D
300  WEND                                                           03ED
310  k$=INKEY$                                                      0522
320  IF k$<>"" THEN k%=ASC(k$)                                      0B35
330  IF k%<>27 THEN OUT &HE0,k%:PRINT k$;:PRINT #1 k$;:k$=""        1872
340  IF k%=13 THEN PRINT:k%=0                                       0C9D
```

Keypresses are checked here. Have you pressed [EXIT]? Line 330 will tell you. A carriage return is checked out by line 340

```
350 WEND                                                            03FC
360 REM **** Close File and Shutdown ****                           1242
370 CLOSE                                                           0428
380 END                                                             0377
```

End of the road for this listing, now use CHECK3 to make sure it's all ok

How type in Listings.

First get Mallard BASIC running. To do this take your CP/M disc – not the Master disc, but a copy – and type BASIC at the A> prompt.

BASIC has been loaded when the A> disappears and is replaced by ok. Now you're ready to type the listings as they appear line by line except for the four figure hex numbers which appear at the end of each line; these are check digits.

When you've finished typing a line check it for typing errors. When you're certain everything is correct press [RETURN]. If, before this, you find a mistake then cursor back to it and make the correction. Once you're happy go on to the next line.

If you spot an error after you've moved on you can type EDIT followed by the line number. Edit the line using the cursor keys and make changes using [DEL]. Press [RETURN] and the line will be accepted in the corrected form.

When you've finished typing the program you should type LIST. This will print the listing on the screen. If you want a printout type LLIST. Now, think up a file name such as "a:NEWCHAR, don't worry about using .bas after it. The name should be no longer than eight letters. To save your program type SAVE followed by the filename you chose. If you want to make use of the checksum program in this month's issue, you should save your file in the following way;

SAVE "A:NEWCHAR.BAS",a

The ",a" at the end of the line saves the file in ASCII form so that it can be read by CHECK3.BAS. In fact it can even be read by a word processor such as LocoScript or Protext.

The next thing to do is type RUN. If the program runs first time you're in luck. If not, don't worry it happens to us all. You will probably get an error message with a line number. This might not be the exact line but it will narrow down the search.

Some people even feel that this debugging of a program is more of an intellectual challenge than writing it in the first place! In fact, copying the listing(s) from the magazine is only the first step. If you do get everything right first time, why not try making some deliberate mistakes to see how they affect the program? If you don't get it right ... remember the programmer's credo, "If in doubt RTFM" (Read The Flipping Manual!).

The dreaded up arrow - how to get it

One point which seems to have foxed many of our readers is how to get the up-arrow or Exponential (to the power of) sign. Although it comes out on screen as ↑, it will print out on paper as ^. To avoid this, the key combination you need to use is as follows:

[EXTRA]+U

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N.B. Masterscan is for 8256/8512 only

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DON'T BLAME DATABASE
Due to problems with an overseas supplier Database Software have suspended sales of all AMX Mouse packages. This situation is not expected to change until June

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N.B. Fabric ribbons do not give as good a print quality as film/carbon ribbons even when new, but as they are continuous will last a lot longer. Recommended for draft copies or in-house memos.

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Access

STALKING THE WILD EDITOR

LANGFORD

A page in the company of author and PCW pundit David Langford

I am reliably informed that 8000 Plus is read by hordes of aspiring authors, eager for insights into the strange ways of the editorial mind. In the hope of gratifying this prurient interest, I polled SF/fantasy editors to discover the pitfalls of word-processed submissions. Out of curiosity I also asked how much of the material was recognisably produced by LocoScript. Now, in a flourish of inadequate sampling, I reveal all.

...Or nearly all. I was soon reminded that editors are constantly overwhelmed by their work of sifting the million or so books submitted each year, to decide the 50,000-odd that are published. Gollancz was busy changing editors during my survey, and Pan was busy relaunching its fantasy, SF and horror lines, while my contacts at NEL and Futura must have been busy in the pub.

Malcolm Edwards of Grafton Books began with a careful distinction: "I'd think that of the unsolicited UK submissions, a quarter to a third are done on the old Amstrad. These days, published authors tend to have a better class of printer, at least, and often have cheap IBM clones."

Note that all unpublished authors, barring a few famous politicians, media stars and murderers, will land on the "unsolicited" heap – otherwise known as the slushpile.

Perfecting presentation

Malcolm Edwards lists his unfavourite things as: "(1) authors who think that the ribbons last as long as the computer, and that the extra wait involved in printing out NLQ pages is more important than my eyesight; (2) the fact that authors who no longer have to retype everything seem to use the time saved in writing longer books instead of using it to write better books of the same length."

Deborah Beale of Century Hutchinson goes on: "It drives me mad if I'm sent continuous paper print-outs, where the author hasn't bothered to separate the pages. Also I loathe right-hand justification. The monotony of such a neat page sends my eyes funny, and often, sort of like the white-noise hiss of air conditioning, sends me to sleep."

Continuous paper is simply difficult to manage, especially for editors who nobly catch up on their reading in the train, armchair or pub.

David Pringle of Interzone bewails the side-effects of this magazine's increasing circulation: "The quantity of unsolicited submissions seems to be going up and up. While one ought to be grateful, it's true that they can be such a pain in the [*now, now — Ed.*]. Perhaps my main complaint is that so many people don't even bother to obtain a copy of the magazine before submitting. 'There seem to be endless thousands of aspiring SF writers who get all their information from *The Writers' and Artists' Yearbook* and nowhere else..."

Identify your market

The point is that every magazine has its own indefinable 'feel'. If you write a thrilling story headlined RAMBO VICAR IN SEX ROMP MERCY DASH, its undeniable connection with religion may not impress the editor of *Church News*. Likewise, a scholarly and literate article on UFOs would obviously be rejected out of hand by the *Sunday Sport*.

Unless you like wasting postage, it's vital to study your market.

David Sutton of *Fantasy Tales* castigates the evils of "cramming a 30-page story folded into four in a standard letter envelope... text running across the whole width of the page with no discernible margins... no indentation of paragraphs... no return postage!"

This reminds me of once receiving a carefully unsealed envelope which had been laboriously embossed with several artistic impressions of 10p pieces. The letter inside achieved a final stroke of unconvincingness with: "PS, I hope your postman does not steal the return postage enclosed....". Full marks for enterprise and economy. The MS went into the bin.

Another niggle from David Sutton: "I occasionally get a MS with the title page set out as though produced on a desktop publishing system, with a flourish of different typefaces for title, author, word count, address, and computer system used! There's no reason why I should hate this except jealousy...."

That is, editors want functional, readable text, and react badly to ornaments which are the typographical equivalent of submitting work on deckle-edged lavender writing paper impregnated with perfume.

"Unaccustomed as I am..."

Wayne of *GM* magazine doesn't confine his gripes to amateurs: "Writers either can't count or badly miss the option of a word counter – especially on Amstrads. We informed readers that we were after short stories of up to 1000 words absolute maximum, to take up one magazine page. What happened? The average length of Amstrad-composed material submitted to us was around 1800 words!

"When we asked 'name' authors to submit short stories of no more than 4800 words, they too went over the top. Most averaged around 6500 and one established author exceeded 8000. The excuses? The amateurs are honest and state that excitement plus lack of a word counter made them overestimate. The professionals put it down to artistic licence."

If you don't fancy investing in word-count software, it's worth hand-counting one big chunk of typical print-out in your normal format, to give a basis for future estimates. Be careful not to include scanty pages of dialogue – "What?" he said. "You know," she snapped. "No I don't." "Yes you do." "No I don't...." – unless of course you write like this all the time.

The last word

Finally, most of the editors in my amazingly wide-ranging survey felt that around 25% of their submissions were detectably matrix-printed on a PCW. *GM*, being largely a specialist market (SF/fantasy games) with strong amateur involvement, was exceptional at 65%.

To draw statistical conclusions from this sample would be mean. Instead, please consult Havelock Ellis's *Psychology of Sex* to learn the standard deviation. ■

TIP OFFS

QT Tips
QQ Questions

Step into the new financial year with Tipoffs

Is LocoScript too taxing? CP/M proving uneconomical? Find it's not paying to use BASIC? Trouble working out your RETURNs? Then turn to Tipoffs: if you have a problem, we can budge it.

In the red briefcase this month is vital information on LocoScript, LocoFile, MicroDesign, CP/M and Protext. Lloyd Davis of Epsom wins £10, less tax, for tackling a high-powered problem, and CA Child of Derby gets £10 for boxing clever with LocoScript. Andrew Grieve of Goole is £30 better off for giving all you lucky LocoMail (and 9512) owners a complete accounts package program!

If you have any PCW tips to declare, don't tell the Inland Revenue, tell us – we pay hard cash for the best ones. Send your tips and queries to Tipoffs, 8000 Plus, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 1EJ.

Put on your Mac

Q Is it possible to get a program that can format a disc in a 3.5 inch drive on a PCW so an Apple Macintosh can read it?
Harry Pattinson, Staffs

8000 PLUS: *No. The only way of transferring text between the two machines is via an RS232 interface and cable. You then need a comms program on the PCW to send the text (we use Dialup from PMS Communications, though PIP can do the job) and on the Mac to receive the text (we use Red Ryder or Microsoft Works).*

Film 90

T Cling film is useful to protect your keyboard from dust, dirt and coffee spills. It can also be useful if you use the Cyrillic, Greek or Symbol 'super shift' character sets in LocoScript 2.

Place the cling film on the keyboard and then put a small circular sticker, available from most stationers, over the relevant keys, with the 'super shift' letter or symbol written on it.

You can keep a different cling film for each foreign language!
Ian Chisnall, Bolton

Correction treatment

Q A correction to the 'Characteristic tip' in *8000 Plus* issue 41, page 67. Some parts of the LocoMail routine that lets you merge just some of the records in the data file into a LocoFile file were garbled – I left a bit out too! The test that doesn't work is

(+Mail)#Date>"30 9 89":<:*:>(-Mail)

and the opening of the document should be as follows:

(+Mail)$="Date":!Test="Y":!Flag=0
#Test="":<:$="":$$"999":*:>
#Flag=0:<:Start=?;Date of beginning of relevant period
Finish=?;Next date after relevant period
$$Finish:Next_date=Date
$$Start:Flag=1:>(-Mail)

while the end of document test is

(+Mail)$+:#Date="":<:Test=""
#Date=Next_date:<:Test="":>(-Mail)
Martin Grieg, Coventry

8000 PLUS: *Thanks for putting things straight.*

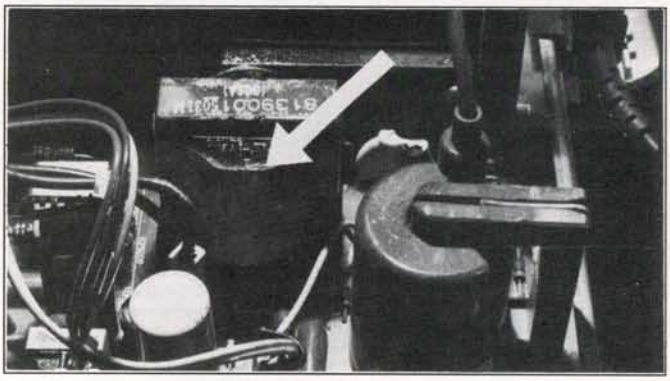
Bottling up the whine

T My PCW recently began to emit a high-pitched whine once it warmed up – the sort of noises you commonly hear from televisions. It occasionally stopped, momentarily ceasing when the printer motor operated.

I traced the source to a transformer, bearing the numbers **8139001 5031M (502A),** whose address is Lower Circuit Printed Board, near Heat-Sink, Opposite side of Monitor to Chips.

After leaving it unplugged from the mains overnight to make sure any residual charge had dissipated, wearing a rubber glove, I opened the back by unscrewing the obvious screws and lifting off the casing. Then I squirted superglue into the gaps between the outer wrapping and the circular capping, where the coil windings are just visible. Transformer formers (or cores) are often made of laminated pieces of metal, but this one appears to be solid. As it can't be the laminations vibrating, I thought maybe it was windings vibrating their way out of their lacquer coating. Anyway, it's quieter now!

I wouldn't recommend this to anyone unless you are very, very careful and well insured, and have an extremely noisy PCW!
Harry Pattinson, Rudgeley, Staffs



For electronics buffs with very sensitive ears: this is where the superglue can finish off that whine

Interface the facts

Q I am rather in the dark concerning interfaces: RS232, CPS8256, SCA Interface... are they basically the same?
AS Butterworth, Derby

8000 PLUS: *Yes, they are. 'RS232' is the general name given to the type of interface that you put on the back of your PCW and which lets you connect it up to a different printer, or to another computer. For example, these words are being written on a PCW. The words will be transferred to an Apple Macintosh via an RS232 interface and cable and these words then typeset into the form you see in front of you using a specialist page makeup program.*

You can also use an RS232 to connect your PCW to a device called a modem and thence to the phone lines. You can then access other people's computers, bring up Prestel on your screen, do certain transactions with your bank via the PCW and so on. If you managed to break into your local council's computer to wipe out your name from the Poll Tax register (by basically ringing it up, giving the correct password then following the menus) this would be 'hacking'.

The CPS8256 is a make of RS232 interface. Some interfaces give you an RS232 with extra bits added. For example, SCA do an interface which adds a clock to an RS232 so that your PCW always knows what time it is.

They also do an interface (the RAM, or memory, interface) which simply gives you extra memory on your PCW, and doesn't have an RS232 interface in it. (Though you can stick an RS232 on the back of the memory interface). Other 'single purpose' interfaces like this might be the Kempston Mouse interface (which let you plug a mouse into the back of your PCW) or MIDI interfaces (which let your PCW record and control the playback of synthesisers and other electronic instruments) or even musical interfaces (which add a three-channel sound to your PCW enabling it to play tunes. I've got one and I know of no-one else who has!). These last ones are really just adaptors, if you like.

Common problem

WINNER

In Tipoffs in issue 42, H Frost wanted to know how to install a program or portion of code in common memory, i.e. **C000** to **FFFF**.

This program demonstrates the use of **LDIR** to move blocks of code. In this case, to move code into common memory so that it may be accessed from any bank.

The program is simply constructed as **LDIR** requires few instructions to do a large task. Its requirements are that **DE** holds the memory location to which the code is to be transferred (in this case **C000h**), **HL** holds the location of the beginning of the block to be moved and **BC** holds the size of the block in bytes (obtained by subtracting the start address from the end address).

After naming some labels for **BDOS** functions and the destination address we **ORG** the program at **100h** so that it will run in the TPA. Then comes the code for **LDIR** which loads the registers as explained above. Once this is done all that remains is to print a message using **BDOS** function 9 telling the user that the instruction has been successfully completed.

The program then jumps to **0000h** to perform a warm boot. The rest of the program will contain the code which the user requires in common memory. To test **LOCATE** you need **LOCATE.COM** and access to **SID.COM** (perhaps on drive M). Simply type **'LOCATE'** at the A> prompt. The message will appear after a second or so and the message between **OLDST** and **OLDEND** will be located at **C000h** onwards. To check this out type **'SID'** and **'DC000'** at **SID's** prompt. The contents of **C000** onwards will be dumped on the screen and the message should be read from the **ASCII** section.

The great advantage of using **LDIR** in this way is that it is very fast even if the code that you are transferring is quite large. The only problem I can envisage with creating huge chunks of code to go above **C000** is writing over **BDOS.** This is not going to happen though unless the code is more than about 12K, and that's a lot in machine code terms. The 'mover' code itself only takes up 19 bytes and only 10 if you leave the message printing out.

LOCATE.ZSM – by L Davis

```
RBOOT   EQU  0                  ;WARM BOOT
BDOS    EQU  5                  ;BDOS ENTRY
PSTR    EQU  9                  ;BDOS PRINT STRING FUNCTION
NEWST   EQU  0C000H

        ORG  0100H              ;ORGANISE IN TPA

MOVE:   LD   DE,NEWST           ; LOAD DE WITH NEW START LOCATION
        LD   HL,OLDST           ; LOAD HL WITH OLD START LOCATION
        LD   BC,OLDEND-OLDST    ; LOAD BC WITH THE NUMBER OF BYTES
        LDIR                    ; AND CATAPULT THEM UP!
        LD   DE, MESS           ; POINT TO THE SIGN-ON MESSAGE
        LD   C,PSTR             ;AND PRINT IT
        CALL BDOS               ; USING OUR TRUSTY FRIEND  IN HIGH MEMORY
        JP   RBOOT              ;THEN TODDLE BACK TO CP/M

MESS    DEFB 'YOUR CODE HAS ARRIVED$' ; OR SOME OTHER HELPFUL MESSAGE

OLDST:  EQU  $                  ; START LABEL

        DEFB 'THIS LITTLE MESSAGE ' ; PUT YOUR CODE IN HERE
        DEFB 'SHOULD NOW APPEAR '   ; AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE AS LONG
        DEFB 'AT NEWST (C000H)'     ; AS IT'S BETWEEN THE TWO LABELS
        RET

OLDEND: EQU  $                  ; END LABEL

        END                     ; FINISH ASSEMBLY
```

Lloyd Davis, Epsom

8000 PLUS: Thanks very much – I think this has to be worth a tenner! If Mr Frost can send us an sae we can pass on a disc with this program on it, which Mr Davis very kindly sent.

The bogeyman was here

How on earth did that text saying **VAFINSTR.001** get up there? It is the title of a letter which I wrote a long time ago and have since deleted.
Graeme Maclennan, Maidstone, Kent

*8000 PLUS: It's the name of your disc. If you press **[f2]** in the disc manager and move down to **'Rename disc'** you can give a new name to replace the **VAFINSTR.001** business. What must have happened is that you've entered it by accident in **'Rename disc'** instead of copying a file (on the adjacent **[f3]**) perhaps. As far as I know, there's no way of actually removing a name altogether in LocoScript, though you can do it in CP/M using **'SET.'***

Down in the dumps

It is often useful to get a screen dump (i.e. a printed image of the screen display) from programs such as Money Manager, LocoScript and so on. Unfortunately the printer always lines the image up against the extreme left edge of the paper, making it look messy if you want to include the screen dump in the middle of a page of text which has normal margins.

Is it possible to offset the print head to make the dump appear in the middle of the paper?
Klaus Koch, Hamburg

*8000 PLUS: Yes, though I'm not sure if it does the printer any good! If you lift off the black top plate and gently push the print head along with your hand, it will move along. When it's at the right place for the left hand edge of the screen dump, press **[EXTRA] [PTR]** as normal and the image will be printed right there instead of the left hand edge.*

*After you've finished, reset the printer by pressing **[PTR]**, moving the cursor to **'Reset'**, and pressing **[+]**. Leave with **[EXIT].***

Phrasing it right

Some tips for Protext.

1. Some useful phrases to put in your EXFILE: KEY L **"^24^u^0^r^24^u^13^"** will insert a line drawn from the left to the right margin whenever you press **[EXTRA] L** KEY **D** Protext asks you to enter a phrase. Give the date. Then, to insert the date in a document, just press **[EXTRA] D.** Make sure this is the last thing in your EXFILE or it won't work.

2. DCOPY is pretty useless on a PCW 8512 as it won't copy a B disc to a B disc. So, replace **DCOPY.COM** on your disc by **DISCKIT.COM** – it gives you the B-to-B facility and can be accessed by typing *DISCKIT**[RETURN]** from within Protext.

3. Printing in condensed style can be a headache. Fine for less than a page, but if you want more, or want to use headers and footers, it can be impossible. It keeps reverting to pica, making a real mess!

The problem is that **[ALT] XC** turns condensed both on and off; the best solution is to alter the printer driver. Put the utilities disc in your drive and type **SETPRINT.** Insert your Protext disc and take the **'load printer driver'** option, giving **PCW.PTR** as the file to load.

Now choose 3, **Set Printer Control Codes**. Move the cursor down to **'condensed'** in the new screen and press **[RETURN].** You see a 15 appear at the bottom next to **'on'** and an 18 next to **'off'**. Delete the 18.

Press **[STOP]** and go back to condensed which should now say just **'on'**. **[STOP]** again to go back to the main **SETPRINT** menu, press **7** to save the new printer driver, and then press **0** to leave. Your condensed problems should now be over!
Jack Bonnor, Upminster

Micro tips

To Micro Design is a fine Desk Top Publisher but can be a little confusing at times as regards scale drawings – and it can be very useful to get the scale just right for applications such as cassette inlays, video box covers, disc boxes, and anything where the design must fit in a specific sized space. Here are a few guidelines to make life easier.

1. The scale supplied on the Icons and Areas disc should be printed out at normal size from a 64K A4 upright page format. This shows you a horizontal comparison of centimetres to blocks of 8 pixels. You can jump along a screen in the Design Section in blocks of 8 pixels by pressing **[ALT]** plus a cursor key.

2. Unfortunately a vertical comparison is not supplied so you will have to put one on yourself with a pen and ruler. It may help to remember that:
Horizontal scale 1cm=2.96 blocks of 8
Vertical scale 1cm=2. 2/3 blocks of 8
Once you have drawn it with a ruler and seen how the cm marks cut the 8-pixel block scale, you may wish to adapt the scale in Micro Design 2 and print out this new scale.

3. To make sure these scales are always to hand cut and trim the horizontal and vertical scales separately and stick with blutack the horizontal one along the black printer flap and the other one down the left hand edge of the printer – as in the diagram.

4. Sometimes the things you will be designing will be too big to do easily in the Design Section so you will have to use the Layout Section. On here you must remember that pressing **[ALT]** and a cursor key moves in jumps of 32 pixels, i.e. four times as far. So something that was 24 blocks (of 8) in the Design Mode would only need 6 blocks (of 32) in the Layout Section.

5. If you intend your design to be detailed you can opt to make it twice the size initially and then either print half size or load the design into a screen format with higher definition (e.g. 64K page to 256K page). This is a simple method of multiplying all numbers you got from the printed scale by 2.

Peter Whelerton,
Middlesborough

Spaced out

Q On the database in Mini Office Professional, every number entered takes up 20 spaces and is right-justified – very annoying and messy looking on screen, though they can be suppressed on printout. Is there any way round this?

MC Dickens,
Dereham, Norfolk

8000 PLUS: *No. However you can eliminate the spaces on printout, as you say, if you define a format. When you come to print out, define a format by taking '**Edit Report/Label**' from the main menu. One option on the next menu is '**suppress excess spaces**', which is the one you want. The numbers now occupy as much space as they need instead of just 20 spaces.*

*Unfortunately, again as you suspect, this causes problems if you have numbers of different lengths. There is a '**Modify TAB settings**' option, but this seems to have no effect. All I can suggest is that you make the numbers alphabetic fields providing you don't need them for totals or calculations.*

Boxing clever, justifiably

WINNER

To You can use LocoScript to put justified text in a box like the one shown here. It sounds complicated, but it isn't really – here's how to do it.

First you have to create two layouts, Layout 1 for the box border characters, and Layout 2 for the text. Let's say the box has margins at 10 and 40, and the text margins at 13 and 37.

LocoScript 2: In the document press **[f1]** and **[ENTER]** for **'Document Setup'**. Press **[f2] 'Layout'** and then **'change stock layouts'**. Move down to Layout 1 and **[ENTER].** Place the margins at 10 and 40 by moving the cursor and pressing **[f1]**, selecting the appropriate margin, and **[ENTER]. [EXIT]** and move down to Layout 2. Place the margins similarly at 13 and 37. Press **[f8] 'Options'** and select **'Justify'** by pressing **[+]**. Then press **[f4] 'Size'** and select Line Spacing 0 using the cursors and **[ENTER]. [EXIT] [ENTER] [EXIT] [ENTER]** takes you back to the main document.

LocoScript 1: In the document press **[f2] 'Layout'** and move down to **'Edit Layout' – 'Layout ??'**, then press 1 **[ENTER]**. You are put in the layout editing screen. Move down with the cursor into the ruler line and move the cursor to 10, then press **[f1]**. Move the cursor to 40, then press **[f2]**. Leave by pressing **[EXIT]**. Now, back in the main document, press **[f2]**, select **'Edit Layout' – 'Layout ??'** but give 2 as the number. This time before moving down into the ruler line, move along with the cursor to **'Line Spacing'** and press **0[ENTER].** Move along to **'Justify'** and press **[+]**. Then move down into the ruler line by pressing the cursor. Put the left margin at 13 and the right at 37 as before. **[EXIT]** back to the main document.

Here are the steps once you've set the layouts as above.

1. Press **[+] LT1 [ENTER]** to select the first layout. Type the top line of the border making it exactly the width of the layout. End the line with a carriage return. (The LocoScript 2 manual has details of all the fancy characters you can use for the border, though a 9512 printer is restricted to what's on the daisywheel, of course).
2. Now type a second line with just two border characters at the extreme left and right of the line. To do this, enter the border character, then press **[+]RJ** (**[+]RA** in LocoScript 2) and enter the second character. End with a **[RETURN].**
3. Type in a repeat of the second line, but this time insert a **[+] LS0 [RETURN]** before the **[RETURN].**
4. Enter **[+] LT2 [ENTER].** Type your text in the normal way letting LocoScript justify it. Make sure it's in the final form as you can't change it after this stage.
5. Go back to the first line of text and put the cursor at the end of the line using **[EOL].**
6. Type in following sequence: six to ten hard spaces (obtained by pressing **[+] [SPACE]) then [+] LT1 [ENTER] [RETURN]**. Then enter a border character, **[+] LS0 [ENTER], [+] RJ** (**[+] RA** in Loco 2), another border character, a **[RETURN], [+]LT2 [ENTER]** and a final **[RETURN].**
7. Copy the sequence above by putting the cursor just before the beginning, pressing **[COPY]**, positioning the cursor at the end, press **[COPY]** again and then 1.
8. At the end of each line except the last (using **[EOL]**) insert all the stuff in step 6 by entering **[PASTE]1**.
9. At the end of the last line press **[+] LT1 [ENTER]** and finish off by repeating the second and then first line of border characters.

Then print out for the magic to happen.

CA Child, Derby

```
**********************************
*                                *
*  Worried by those things       *
*  you think are totally         *
*  unjustifiable, such as        *
*  earthquakes, famine,          *
*  V.A.T., war and Bob's         *
*  Full House?                   *
*                                *
**********************************
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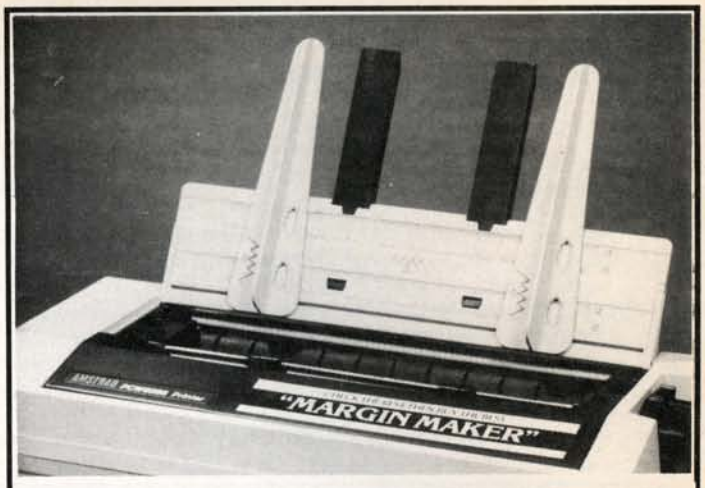

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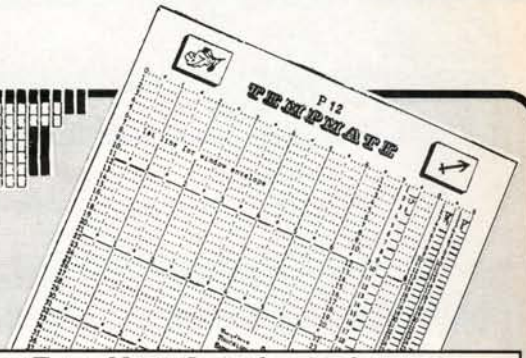

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A good account of himself

WINNER

A couple of months ago someone requested a LocoMail routine that would work out monthly accounts – tot up incomings and outgoings. Here's a suggestion. Type the routine below and call it **ACCOUNTS.FIL.**

To run the program, place the cursor bar over **ACCOUNTS.FLL** in the disc management screen, and press **F** and **[ENTER],** then wait a few seconds. Then just follow the prompts. LocoMail asks for a date, type of transaction and description (incoming or outgoing) and an amount. After entering the amount, you are asked for further items or not. If you answer y for yes to this last prompt, the date, item, etc., repeats itself.

When you answer n for no, having entered all the items you wanted to for this session, you will then be presented with a small menu. Entering the number of your selection activates the next bit. The menu is hopefully clear, and you will mainly use option 3 after each session. This sets up the new file with a copy of the LOCOMAIL program, so that you can build up a complete month's entries over several sessions.

If you select option 2, the running totals for the month are displayed in reverse video. Option 1 should only be used after you have completed the whole month, so that the final totals can be automatically calculated and inserted into your final document.

After pressing option 3, LocoMail re-inserts the **ACCOUNTS** program below your last entry. This is to allow you to enter further items below those already put in at a later date. For the first session you could save to a filename of **JAN1990A.FLL** or something similar. Then when you want to enter further details in January 1990, you would select **JAN1990A.FLL** to fill and not the **ACCOUNTS.FLL** file. However, you will have to save the resulting file as **JAN1990B.FLL** to access it for the next additions in January 1990 and so on.

To finally finish, LocoMail displays another menu offering the chance to Fill again or Finish, you should select Finish.

After your first fill, you should still have the **ACCOUNTS.FLL** file and a new file **JAN1990A.FLL.**

Using the extension of **FLL** is a good reminder of the type of file it is, a LOCOMAIL Fill type.

When you have completed a whole month and chosen option 1 to calculate the totals this final file could be saved to **JAN1990.ACC** to show that it is a complete month.

To start a new month, start with **ACCOUNTS.FLL** again.

Andrew Grieve, Goole, Humberside

Part 1 of that accounts routine...

...part 2...

...and part 3

Take your pixel

Q I know you can put characters at a specific position on the screen in BASIC, but is it possible to draw individual pixels, i.e. dots, on the screen as it is with many other computers?

I'm also confused by the references in the CP/M manual to the function that lets you control the printer and print out graphics. Can you help?

JD Gallon, St Andrews, Fife

8000 PLUS: *Well, yes, but not easily. You have three options, which in descending order of easiness are:*

1. Buy Lightning BASIC, £24.95 from CP Software (0993 823463), which adds many to BASIC such as pixel-drawing.

2. Get a back copy of 8000 Plus August 1988, issue 23, and turn to page 58. There's a short BASIC listing on there by an old friend of 8000 Plus, Larry Simons, which gives you the pixel plotting function. Infact, it's probably time the editor reprinted this one!

3. Get familiar with GSX, the graphics extensions that you get free with your PCW. Unfortunately GSX is hardly mentioned in the manual and isn't particularly easy to use. There was a series on GSX in 8000 Plus from issues 25 to 28.

As for printing graphics on the printer, I think the best thing to do is point you towards 8000 Plus issue 24, September 1988, page 36. It explained in admirably clear detail how to control the printer, and it's high time it was reprinted and I got a repeat fee!

Sticky problem

LocoScript has a special feature to make one-handed typing easier. With 'sticky shift keys' engaged, combinations using [SHIFT], [ALT] and [EXTRA] don't have to be simultaneous – e.g. to get a capital F, you can press [SHIFT] and then F; to go up a paragraph, you can press [ALT] and then [PAGE] with the same finger, and so on.

To select it, press [f8] in disc management and choose the bottom option, and the same to deselect it. If you press S, E or A by mistake, another press cancels it.

Kathleen Axe, Birmingham

In the archives

If you're short on disc space you can make files you only need for backup or archive purposes smaller. Select **[f1]** (**[f7]** in Loco 2) in the disc manager and select **'Make ASCII file',** selecting **'Simple text'.** Give the new name and when finished erase the old version. To view the archived version, you have to create a new file and insert the **ASCII** file while editing the new one (**[f1]** in Loco 2, **[f7]** in Loco 1). You lose all the bold, italic and layout commands etc, and all the squiggly symbols, but save 25%-35% space on each one.

Ian Chisnall, Bolton

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The Good Software File

These pages provide a guide to the best software around for the Amstrad PCW. Published in three monthly parts, this time it's the turn of Spreadsheets, Games and Graphics to face the ultimate test. We've set out to test every piece of software we could lay our hands on, and to give you enough information to decide which program is the one you might be looking for.

The selection isn't comprehensive, but the software listed here represents what we think is the best of that currently available. As well as a brief summary of what they do, there are the main Plus and Minus points for each program - Pluses have a ▲ by them, Minuses a ▼.

Most of the packages mentioned throughout this guide should run on all three models of the PCW - unless, of course, we have stated otherwise.

Spreadsheets

If a database replaces an address book, then a spreadsheet replaces the back of an old envelope. It is really an electronic piece of paper which allows you to jot down numbers, juggle them around and analyse the cost benefits of a situation. Vital for businesses, spreadsheets can be useful to home users too: if you want a bank loan you will find that showing your bank manager a spreadsheet printout of your living expenses answers a lot of questions!

A typical spreadsheet has a grid of rows and columns. This grid forms a screenful of cells identified by their column and row numbers, e.g. A3, K36 etc. Each cell can contain a simple number, some text to make the page easier to read, or a formula telling the spreadsheet to work out a number using values from elsewhere. The power of spreadsheets is in this last category, formulae. You can make a cell's value depend on the value of cells above it, or to the left of it, and this value is then automatically updated if changes are made to the other cells.

So how do you choose between the various spreadsheets? One difference is sheet size, i.e. the number of cells you are allowed to work with. You'll need a few hundred for home use, and 1000 or more for business use. Another area is the range of formulae that you can use – all spreadsheets allow simple column and row totalling, but with some you can get complex statistical analyses too. As with all software, think very carefully what you will need before choosing.

Mini Office Professional Plus

£49.95 • Database Software • 0625 878888

Mini Office is a suite of five integrated programs – database, word processor, graphics module, comms package, and a very good spreadsheet. Broadly similar to SuperCalc in operation with usual features of auto or manual recalculation, replicating of rows/columns, powerful range of arithmetic functions etc. Printout is a strong point - rows/columns can be put into italic/bold etc, and prints draft, NLQ or even sideways! Can't sort and can't just save data or structure of a spreadsheet, but maximum size of spreadsheet is claimed to be 320k. You can use the data from a spreadsheet in the graphics module directly. The manual is, however, pretty useless.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Good, full-featured easy to use spreadsheet
- ▲ Prints in draft, NLQ or even sideways
- ▲ Maximum size of spreadsheet 320k
- ▲ Can transfer data directly to graphics module
- ▲ Can drive 24-pin printouts
- ▼ 'Save' options not as versatile as SuperCalc

Cracker turbo

£49.00 • Paperback Software • 0245 265017

A spreadsheet designed with advanced calculating power firmly in mind, including statistical functions. The screen layout is totally defined by the user, and cell value calculations can almost be full programs, e.g DO ... WHILE. It might prove too complex if all you want is simple spreadsheet operations. The screen messages are very helpful though. Turbo is claimed to be faster than Cracker 2 though sometimes isn't noticeably so.

Powerful

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Can cope with very complex formulae
- ▲ Flexible screen format defined by the user
- ▲ On-screen prompts are very clear
- ▲ Graphs/charts can be automatically produced
- ▼ Documentation is large, but obscure and confusing
- ▼ You've got to do a lot of work just to get started
- ▼ Very complex for quick, simple applications
- ▼ Needs some programming skills to get the most out of it
- ▼ Free workspace is on the small side (17k) although memory is used efficiently

SuperCalc 2

£69.95 • Amsoft/Sorcim • 0991 510 8787

Best general buy

The best selling spreadsheet, officially endorsed by Amstrad. SuperCalc 2 is broadly similar to ScratchPad Plus, but it has a smaller workspace and is less flexible about the allowed spreadsheet dimensions.
You can store sequences of commands for repetitive calculations. Price includes VAT and p&p.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Excellent manual – sections for beginners and experts.
- ▲ Stores commands to run from files
- ▲ "Data Interchanger" allows you to transfer spreadsheet data to other applications
- ▲ Comprehensive range of calculation functions available
- ▲ Screen can be split into 2 windows
- ▼ Spreadsheet is limited by memory size
- ▼ No graphical output facilities

First Calc

£29.95 • Minerva Systems • 0392 437756

Touted as a quick and simple to use program for the beginner, this is nevertheless quite a powerful spreadsheet, with a large capacity, ability to replicate formulae, export etc. Really it's not vastly more user-friendly than the rest but a good value package all the same.

Easy to use

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ A lot of program for the money
- ▲ Good tutorials with demo files
- ▲ Simple to use but reasonably sophisticated
- ▼ Not much easier to use than more powerful packages
- ▼ Program is limited by the memory capacity of the PCW (300 - 400 filled cells)

Graphics

You can use a graphics package to create and store diagrams and drawings on disc, to be amended, adjusted or printed out at will.

There are three main types of graphics package: art, technical drawing and graph plotting programs. In art packages the emphasis is on designs and pictures, with freehand drawing facilities, a selection of pretty text fonts and a variety of patterns to fill areas with. These are made much more effective and easier to use if you have a mouse.

Technical drawing packages concentrate on shapes, such as squares and polygons, lines and labels. Finally graph

plotters will take your data and turn them into bar charts, pie charts and so on. 9512 owners will have to buy a dot matrix printer to do all this, of course.

Master Paint
£19.95 • Database Software • 0625 878888

A WIMP environment graphics package (windows, icons , menus, and pointer) which will run with Kempston, AMX or Electric Studio mice. Usual facilities for drawing curved or straight lines, polygons, boxes, circles and ellipses, and a host of 'fill' patters. 'Undo' function and eraser facility, plus the ability to zoom in on a part of the picture.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ WIMP environment makes it easy to use
- ▲ Zoom function lets you fine-tune your pictures
- ▲ Good range of effects
- ▲ Undo and erase facilities
- ▼ Text fonts are boring
- ▼ Can't move large blocks with the copy function

MasterScan
£69.95 • Database Software • 0625 878888

A device which clips on to your printer head and scans pictures, sending the digitised result to disc. You can then use the pictures in desktop publications or in other graphics packages, such as Master Paint. Very useful for newlsetter production but the claims for Master Scan as a low-cost fax machine are grandiose - the quality of scanned text is poor if the text is anything less than headline size.

Powerful

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Simple method of getting good digitised graphics
- ▲ Suitable for all desktop publishing programs
- ▲ Contrast control useful
- ▼ Quality of scanned text is bad – no good for faxes
- ▼ Problems with illustrations containing lots of grey

Lightning BASIC
£24.95 • CP Software • 0993 823463

A very clever add-on to normal Basic which works on three levels. The first contains all the everyday commands, whilst the second and third levels are used for designing icons, characters and sprites. There is something in it or everyone, whether an experienced Basic programmer or a beginner.

Powerful

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Simple and easy to use
- ▲ Makes simple Basic programs look really professional
- ▲ Good fun to use
- ▼ Documentation can be unclear
- ▼ Printed output is coarse draft quality
- ▼ Can only cope with simple graphics

Complement Fonts & Borders
£12.50 • Dragonfly Designs • N/A

Although it can be used with all the main DTP packages, this latest complement disc was designed to work alongside Stop Press. The 11 fonts supplied on the disc show consistent good design and artistic flair and are easily loaded.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ The fonts provide a very professional finish.
- ▲ It is possible to rotate and reverse elements.
- ▲ Very user-friendly.
- ▼ Setting up borders tends to be difficult and time-consuming.
- ▼ Printed output could be better (but it is still above average).

Signwriter
£29.95 • Wight Scientific • 01 858 2699

Offers the widest range of features of any of the poster printing programs. Signwriter provides a range of 20 fonts, some of them very imaginative. Ideal for posters.

PLUSES •MINUSES

- ▲ You can redesign fonts and design your own symbols.
- ▲ A wide range of interesting fonts is available
- ▼ Not very user-friendly.
- ▼ Font design is slow.

Stop Press
£49.95 • AMS • 0625 878888

Though touted as a DTP program, Stop Press is an excellent graphics package. Can present data in the form of graphs, pie charts etc., and has the usual range of facilities to draw and fill triangles, boxes and so on plus a very good 'zoom' option which lets you examine the effect of changes in great detail.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Good graph drawing facilities
- ▲ Can design your own area fill patterns
- ▲ Good range of clip art, which you can modify if you wish
- ▲ Can superimpose one image on another
- ▲ Works with AMX and Kempston mice
- ▲ Is also a good DTP package
- ▼ Undoing wrongly placed text is difficult

AYE PLUS
£24.95 • CP Software • 0993 823463

The full title is 'All you ever wanted to know about graphics, the universe and everything on PCW 8256/8512 ... but were afraid to ask PLUS' Phew. A wide range of little programs to do graphic things on the PCW like smooth scrolling, defining windows, moving sprites around. The programs are written in assembler, with the source code provided if you want to see how to program them for yourself and adapt the routines.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Wide range of useful functions
- ▲ Can be used from BASIC, machine code, or other language
- ▲ The assembler source code is supplied
- ▲ Inexpensive
- ▲ Good manual
- ▲ CP don't mind you using their routines in programs you sell
- ▼ A bit long-winded to use from BASIC
- ▼ No easy way of loading just the routines you want

VIDI PCW
£79.99 • Rombo Productions • 0506 414631

A very similar package to the Electric Studio digitiser; not much to choose between the two. Rombo's works with the Fleet Street Editor, Electric Studio's with Newsdesk International.

Best general buy

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Text can be inserted from within the program
- ▲ 16 levels of shading
- ▲ Can print images to screen in defined order and time apart.
- ▼ Unhelpful manual

Games

Academy (Tau Ceti II)
£14.95 • CRL • 01 533 2918 • 8000s only

The sequel to Tau Ceti. To qualify as an advanced skimmer pilot, you must complete successfully 20 missions. Blast enemy craft with your personally designed skimmer.

GRAPHICS	4/5	ADDICTIVENESS	5/5
LASTING APPEAL	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	5/5

Avon
£14.95 • Topologika • 0733 244682 • All PCWs

Based on the world and work of Shakespeare, this text-only adventure puts many a puzzler to even the most well-versed student of the bard. A handy help mode will get you out of the tighter corners. Compulsive gameplay!

ADDICTIVENESS	4/5	ATMOSPHERE	4/5
CHALLENGE	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Backgammon
£12.95 • CP Software • 0993 823463 • All PCWs

A fairly good implementation of the gambling board-game. Playing speed is easily alterable and is totally unrelated to the games level of skill control.

RANGE OF FEATURES	4/5	STRENGTH OF PLAY	3/5
GRAPHICS	4/5	DOCUMENTATION	3/5

Blackstar
£14.95 • CRL • 01 533 2918 • 8000s only

A traditional text adventure with large playing area. You explore Castle Blackstar in search of a power orb.

ATMOSPHERE	4/5	INTERACTION	2/5
CHALLENGE	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Bounder
£13.95 • Gremlin • 0742 753423 • 8000s only

A graphics bouncing-ball game . You have to direct the ball over a treacherous network of squares & hexagons. Persevere – or use the cheat mode!

GRAPHICS	4/5	ADDICTIVENESS	3/5
LASTING APPEAL	3/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Brian Clough's Fortunes
£19.99 • CDS • 0302 321134 • All PCWs

A cross between Monopoly and Football Manager, combining board and PCW. Go for league and cup success – but keep the bank manager happy too!

GRAPHICS	2/5	ADDICTIVENESS	4/5
LASTING APPEAL	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Bridge Player Galactica 2150
£19.95 • CP Software • 0993 823463 • All PCWs

The upgraded Bridge Player 2000. Excellent Tutor mode with hands written by Nichiola Gardener of the London Bridge School. Retains strong play.

GRAPHICS	3/5	STRENGTH OF PLAY	4/5
LASTING APPEAL	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	3/5

Classic Games
£19.95 • CP Software • 0993 823463 • All PCWs

A compilation of classic 'thinking' games on one disc: Clock Chess, Bridge Player, Backgammon and Draughts. Excellent value for money.

Clock Chess 89
£19.95 • CP Software • 0993 823463 • All PCWs

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Access VISA

One of the better PCW chess programs. You can alter the level of play by specifying a time limit. Capable of very strong play and the 3D graphics are excellent.

GRAPHICS	4/5	STRENGTH OF PLAY	5/5
RANGE OF FEATURES	5/5	VALUE VERDICT	5/5

Colossus Chess 4.0

£19.99 • CDS Software • 0302 321134 • All PCWs

A very strong chess game which manages to use time which you spend thinking to plan its strategy. Bags of features, including blindfold games.

GRAPHICS	3/5	STRENGTH OF PLAY	3/5
LASTING APPEAL	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	3/5

Corruption

£24.95 • Rainbird • 0666 504 326 • All PCWs

Takes you into the heady world of stocks and shares where making money is what it's all about. There's something rotten in the state of Scott Electronics and it's up to you to find out what.

ATMOSPHERE	4/5	INTERACTION	5/5
CHALLENGE	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	5/5

Cyrus II Chess

£15.95 • Amsoft • 0279 454555 • All PCWs

Chess game with a stunningly detailed 3-D display. The play is quite strong, with several handy features like allowing you to take back a move.

GRAPHICS	5/5	STRENGTH OF PLAY	3/5
LASTING APPEAL	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Double t Patience

£14.95 • Thurston Techniques • 0395 277496 • All PCWs

Six well-known card games (from Poker Patience to Pairs) to be played either alone or against the computer.

GRAPHICS	2/5	ADDICTIVENESS	5/5
LASTING APPEAL	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	3/5

Fish

£24.99 • Rainbird • 0666 504 326 • All PCWs

The underwater world of Hydropolis is under threat from a gang of interdimensional anarchists. They've stolen a focus wheel and dismantled it; your job is to get it back. Excellent graphics.

ATMOSPHERE	5/5	INTERACTION	4/5
CHALLENGE	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	5/5

Gnome Ranger

£14.95 • Level 9 • 0344 487597 • All PCWs

You follow the adventures of Ingrid Bottomlow, the intrepid gnome, through a fairy tale landscape full of compelling puzzles. Humorous and rather quaint.

ATMOSPHERE	3/5	INTERACTION	3/5
CHALLENGE	3/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Green

£12.00 • Classic Software • All PCWs

Race against the Global Warming in this new eco-drama game set in forestland threatened by over zealous lumberjacks. Preserve your morality points, perfect your strategy, and you might save the trees from destruction.

ATMOSPHERE	4/5	CHALLENGE	3/5
GAMEPLAY	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Guild of Thieves

£24.95 • Rainbird • 0666 504 326 • 8000s only

To join the select Guild of Thieves in Kerovnia, you first have to show your worth by fleecing an island of all its treasures. An excellent adventure!

ATMOSPHERE	5/5	INTERACTION	4/5
CHALLENGE	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	5/5

Head Coach

£15.95 • DGA/Coda • 061 330 0184 • All PCWs

You coach an American Football team, picking players and deciding tactics against real NFL teams and players. Incredibly detailed simulation – a must for NFL fans!

ATMOSPHERE	4/5	INTERACTION	5/5
CHALLENGE	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Head Over Heels

£14.95 • Ocean • 061 832 6633 • 8000s only

A superlative, compulsive 3D arcade adventure where you control either Head or Heels. Escape from Castle Blacktooth and free the Empire's enslaved planets.

GRAPHICS	5/5	ADDICTIVENESS	5/5
LASTING APPEAL	5/5	VALUE VERDICT	5/5

Ingrid's Back

£19.95 • Level 9 • 0344 487597 • All PCWs

Sequel to Gnome Ranger in which Ingrid returns to Li ttle Moaning to find it under threat from Jasper Quickbuck who wants to replace it with a yuppie estate. Adventure in 3 parts.

ATMOSPHERE	4/5	INTERACTION	4/5
CHALLENGE	5/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Jinxster

£24.95 • Rainbird • 0666 504326 • All PCWs

This one's all about saving the civilisation of a place call Aquitania from the wicked Green Witches. All you have to do is find and reassemble a magic bracelet and redirect its errant powers. A very atmospheric game.

ATMOSPHERE	5/5	INTERACTION	4/5
CHALLENGE	5/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Knightorc

£19.95 • Level 9 • 0934 814450 • All PCWs

You are an orc in this typical Level 9 adventure by the name of Gridleguts. An addictive game with lots of action, plenty to explore and mind-bending puzzles.

ATMOSPHERE	5/5	INTERACTION	5/5
CHALLENGE	5/5	VALUE VERDICT	5 /5

Lancelot

£14.95 • Mandarin/Level 9 • 0625 878888 • All PCWs

A game in three parts which recounts the adventures of Lancelot.. Manufacturers have vividly created an Arthurian world in which points are awarded for displays of chivalry, valour or benevolence. The game permits a full range of powerful commands.

ATMOSPHERE	5/5	INTERACTION	5/5
CHALLENGE	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	5/5

Mindfighter

£24.99 • Abstract Concepts/Activision • 01 431 1101 • 8000s only

An adventure game set in post-holocaust Southampton. Hero is a psychic 11 year old boy who can change himself into all different kinds of animals. and who has accidentally projected himself into the future. It's up to him to change the course of events and prevent nuclear war.

ATMOSPHERE	5/5	INTERACTION	3/5
CHALLENGE	5/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Myth

£22 (membership) • Magnetic Scrolls • 0279 726585 • All PCWs

Join Official Secrets and you can have access to this excellent adventure game, where you find yourself cast as Poseidon - minus his godly powers! Rescue your fate from the lap of the gods.

ADDICTIVENESS	4/5	ATMOSPHERE	4/5
CHALLENGE	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	5/5

The Pawn

£24.95 • Rainbird • 0666 504 326 • All PCWs

An excellent adventure with dozens of superb screen illustrations, zany characters and a host of baffling puzzles. Will keep you entranced for hours.

ATMOSPHERE	5/5	INTERACTION	5/5
CHALLENGE	5/5	VALUE VERDICT	5/5

Return to Doom

£12.95 • Topologika • 0733 244682 • All PCWs

Sequel to Countdown to Doom; you're back on the planet Doomawangera again to track down the ambassador Regina who has been kidnapped by some very unpleasant robots. Another text-only adventure game.

ATMOSPHERE	3/5	INTERACTION	2/5
CHALLENGE	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Scapeghost

£19.95 • Level 9 • 0934 814450 • All PCWs

You're a ghost with a mission - to catch the crooks who framed you on earth.You tramp your way through spooky cemeteries - solve the puzzles and brave the vivid graphics, and justice will be done.

ATMOSPHERE	4/5	CHALLENGE	4/5
GRAPHICS	5/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Silicon Dreams

£19.95 • Rainbird • 0666 504 326 • All PCWs

A trilogy of intriguing adventure games. You are secret agent Kim Kimberley saving Snowball 9 from almost certain doom! With a humorous novella.

ATMOSPHERE	4/5	INTERACTION	4/5
CHALLENGE	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Starglider

£24.95 • Rainbird • 0666 504 326 • 8000s only

A sophisticated shoot-'em-up with 3D vector graphics and a dose of strategy too. Your task is to save Novenia, helped by a complex playing guide.

GRAPHICS	5/5	ADDICTIVENESS	4/5

LASTING APPEAL	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	5/5

Steve Davis Snooker

£19.99 • CDS • 0302 321134 • All PCWs

Surprisingly realistic simulation of both pool and snooker games - not as easy as it looks either! Foul shots, breaks and allows for spin, side, strength of shot. Good value, despite all the balls being greens!

GRAPHICS	2/5	ADDICTIVENESS	3/5
LASTING APPEAL	3/5	VALUE VERDICT	3/5

Strike Force Harrier

£19.95 • Mirrorsoft • 01-377 4645 • 8000s only

A combat simulation of a Hawker Harrier, designed in conjunction with British Aerospace. Very detailed and realistic but you'll need to put in a few hours with the manual to get off the ground.

GRAPHICS	4/5	ADDICTIVENESS	3/5
LASTING APPEAL	3/5	VALUE VERDICT	3/5

Time and Magik

£14.95 • Mandarin Software • 0625 879920 • All PCWs

An excellent trilogy of time travel adventure which can be played in any order. Your task is to protect the history of the world from the destructive timelords –another very atmospheric game.

ATMOSPHERE	5/5	INTERACTION	4/5
CHALLENGE	5/5	VALUE VERDICT	5/5

Tetris

£19.99 • Mirrorsoft • 01-377 4837 • 8000s only

You fit together bricks of various shapes that drop out of the sky at the bottom of the screen. The better the fit, the higher your score. One of those ridiculously simple ideas which is very addictive!

GRAPHICS	3/5	ADDICTIVENESS	5/5
LASTING APPEAL	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	5/5

Tomahawk

£19.95 • Digital Int. • 0276 684959 • All PCWs

A sophisticated Apache helicopter flight simulator. Impressive cockpit view graphics as you engage in combat missions – can be used with a joystick too.

GRAPHICS	4/5	ADDICTIVENESS	3/5
LASTING APPEAL	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

UK Trivia Treasure Hunt

£24.95 • IMC Software • 0604 54814 • All PCWs

Pit your wits against the program in this carefully planned game which would have Anneka working overtime. The quest for success is tricky ; correct answers take you to various locations nationwide - but watch your fuel gauge or you'll be back to square one.

ATMOSPHERE	3/5	GRAPHICS	4/5
CHALLENGE	3/5	INTERACTION	2/5

Ultimate Quiz

£14.95 • DGC Software • 0337 7444 • All PCWs

Ten quizzes on topics as diverse as the Highway Code and the Italian language. Clean screens and an easy to use program make Ultimate Quiz excellent entertainment and good value for money too.

GRAPHICS	5/5	CHALLENGE	4/5
LASTING APPEAL	3/5	VALUE VERDICT	5/5

World of soccer

£15.95 • DGA/Coda • 061 330 0184 • All PCWs

A soccer management simulation game; you select squads of players for your international team and guid e them through the European and World Cups. Gives a good insight into the kind of strategic thinking required.

ATMOSPHERE	4/5	INTERACTION	3/5
CHALLENGE	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

Yes Chancellor

£14.95 • Topologika • 0733 244682 • All PCWs

Become John Major for a day with this intense game written in BASIC. Whether it's budget balance or inflation control at stake, the Unions and the voters still have to be kept happy. Now is your chance to see if you can do it better than the professionals at Westminster!

ATMOSPHERE	3\5	INTERACTION	3/5
CHALLENGE	4/5	VALUE VERDICT	4/5

RDI

Now into our third year and still not one single complaint from any of our customers from our 2 years!

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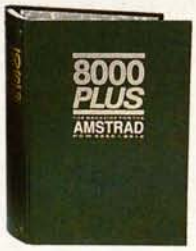

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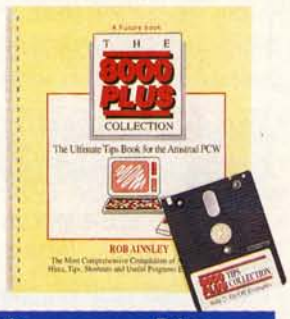

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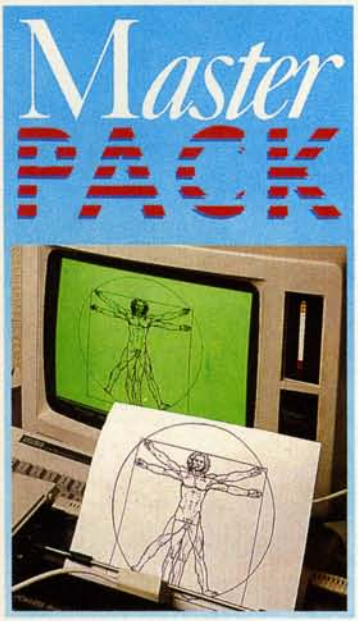

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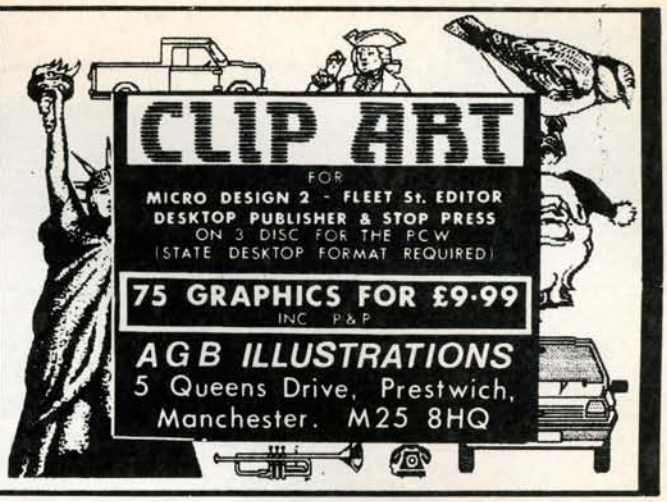

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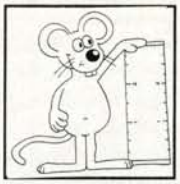

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POST SCRIPT

If you've got anything to say – say it here!

Welcome to the listening pages of your favourite PCW magazine. If you've got anything at all to pass on, you can always be sure of a prominent platform and an eager audience here. And it doesn't even have to be about computers. These are your pages; do with them what you will. Send your letters to Postscript, 8000 Plus, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2AP

Radio killed the VDU star

Towards the end of last year, I purchased an 8256 and have been thoroughly delighted with it. I use it for both its word processor and its computer capabilities.
Consequently, it is used a fair amount, and that is where the problem lies.

My family enjoys listening to the radio. They don't spurn television, it's simply that there are a number of radio programmes they enjoy, or at least did enjoy. Unfortunately, the computer causes considerable interference with FM (VHF) reception. I have tried simple solutions like suggesting that they retune to medium wave but this has been received with more abuse than I think is reasonable for a well-balanced family unit.

I enquired in my local radio shop, but they were unable to suggest anything. I have not seen any such device advertised at all and am wondering if you, or anyone else has come across a similar problem and perhaps a solution.

It is worth adding that I am not an engineering genius; the simpler the better is, therefore, the philosophy I follow.

My compliments to you for a most enjoyable, and useful, magazine.

A N Stoneman
Folkestone
Kent

8000 PLUS: *You don't say how far away from each other the radio and PCW are situated. We have heard of this happening before now, especially when the PCW and radio are within ten or fifteen feet of one another. If increasing the distance between them doesn't work, your best bet is to get your radio wired up to an external aerial – like your television. You will be able to get one of these from your local Dixons store for about £40. Expensive, we know, but it will cut out any FM interference you are getting.*

Juggling clubs

It is my intention to buy a computer word processor for my business/pleasure use; the Amstrad range seems to be a likely choice. As a previously non-computer person, I have so many questions that it would not be possible to list them all. Therefore, could you please let me have the address and/or phone number of any club or association in my area that could give me advice or possibly even some practical experience before I spend a lot of money – maybe buying the wrong one.

It may be that a second hand computer would suffice, one which had been outgrown by a more advanced user.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

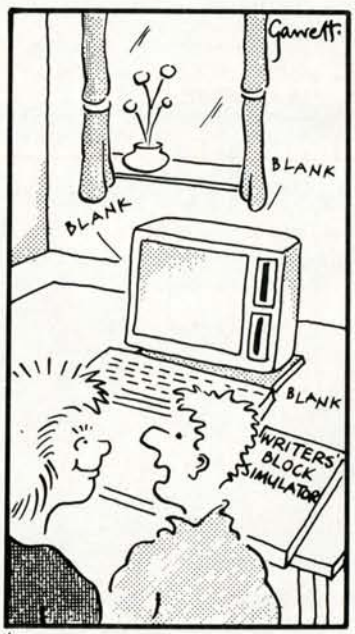
F A Kosek
Redhill
Surrey

8000 PLUS: *We're afraid that the nearest (and it's not that near) fully-operational PCW club to Redhill is the Middlesex PCW Computer Group which gathers fortnightly at the Hanwell Community Centre in Greenford. Talk to the group's secretary, Ken Ritchie, on 0992 583744 for further information. Since it does seem quite a long way for you to travel, however, we've placed an 'alert' in the Club News section of this month's magazine – on page 7 – to see if anybody else in Redhill or the surrounding area is interested in starting up a club. We will, as they say, keep you posted in future issues of the magazine.*

The write stuff

Thank you for a very interesting March issue. I have not long retired and recently taken up an evening class in Creative Writing. I have seen the odd article on writing in 8000 Plus in the recent past, but in the current issue there were three excellent related articles: 1) Be your own publisher 2) Demon Writer 3) Rosemary's Baby. I like to read of people's experiences with various software. Tests and reports are all very well, but sometimes a few remarks from the ultimate customer are far more enlightening.

Frank Dineen
Essex



"THIS SIMULATES THE FEELING YOU GET LOOKING AT A BLANK SHEET OF PAPER"

8000 PLUS: *Thanks for your letter, Frank*

A ghost in the machine

Could you tell me why my PCW won't work anymore? A bald question I know but there you go – I am a desperate man! I will, however, proceed to give you the story so far ...

I bought my PCW8512 from KLDMS Ltd of Surbiton seven years ago and up until last week it worked like a dream. Also up until that point I had never used anything other than LocoScript 1 and DISCKIT to format my disc. Well, last Monday my daughter, Yolanda, brought home a disc which she had got from a friend at school. I know that this kind of thing is not really on but Yolanda said something about Public Dominion and assured me that it was all 'above board'. She asked me if she could "Run" the disc and I, of course said yes.

She was working in what we like to call the office, and I was watching the television. Well, the day after, I went to write a few letters and upon switching on the machine the following message appeared. "You have just logged into the Rilapax Empire and your machine is no longer yours." I obviously thought that Yolanda had been playing some tricks – she is very good at computer studies. So, I switched off and on again and put in a new start-of-day disc. The following message appeared. "Ha Ha sucker, we of the Rilapax Empire do not give in so easily – if you wish to regain control of your machine you should send $25.00 to this address." There followed a PO Box number and address in America. Since then my PCW has refused to function and every time I try all I get are more messages and more requests for money. Eventually I received what I can only call a final demand. This said that my PCW's Zilog 80 would be "blown to s****" if I tried turning it on again. Needless to say, I have not tried.

I can assure you that Yolanda was as surprised as myself, and so were her friend and his father who works a great deal with computers. I refuse to send any money and have written to the address in protest. Do you know anything about this? Has it happened to a PCW before in your experience? Is it a virus? Please could you help – as you can see by my handwriting I need my PCW badly.

Mr K Cox
Berkhampstead

8000 PLUS: *Well, Mr Cox, the good news is that we have heard of this. Yours is only one of several letters we have received over the last two weeks. When you said Public Dominion we think that you are actually referring to the Public Domain. This is normally a reputable and enjoyable area to get involved in but this time it seems to have turned rather sour.*

We contacted the Public Domain Central Enquiries Unit in Cheedle Hume and their spokesman, Mr Carroway, told us the following. "This sounds very much like the SparGax virus which was prevalent on

the West Coast of America – principally California – late last year. In January of this year court proceedings were taken out against a Mr J D Haldremain and a Ms P Erlichmeine of San Fernando by the American authorities. It appears that they had flooded the States and Canada with a whole variety of viruses and demands for money. Unhappily they skipped bail. It now looks as if they have ended up in England."

The bad news is that there is still no cure for the virus other than to replace the Z80 central processor which is attacked by SparGax or rather by this SparGax clone. You will also need to replace the two M12/FF3's (or 2's if your machine was made before 1980) math co-processor chips. Sorry about that and better luck next time. If anyone knows anymore about Haldermain, Erlichmeine, SparGax or any other viruses, we would be most interested to hear.

Talk to me

I am a user of the PCW 8256 and all my friends have Amigas and Ataris which I think have more K than the PCW. I am only interested in programming, etc, not playing games; anyway, my friends have software to make their computer talk. Please could you write or tell me if there is software for the PCW to make speech. If so, could you also tell me how much it is and where I could purchase it from.

Robert Shore
Addlestone
Surrey

***8000* PLUS:** *You can get your PCW to talk to you by means of SM Engineering's Speech Synthesiser. The Synthesiser costs £35 and has, at its heart, the dedicated speech chip, SP0256AL2, from General Instruments. It comes with a Centronics parallel printer port connector on the back which means that it will connect to any Centronics interface on any computer. For further information, either read our review of the Synthesiser in our January edition or call SM Engineering on 0323 766262.*

Computer literacy

Having recently purchased an Amstrad 8512 and not minding being called computer illiterate, I have been searching for any information about the machine I can find readable. The accompanying literature supplied with the machine starts off aimed at me then progressively becomes unreadable.

I have now found a book *'Easy Guide to Amstrad PCW 8256/8512 Word Processors'* by ED Wynn which is marvellous and covers the WP at exactly my level. Now I need to find a book that covers the PC side. Can you help?

I find your magazine helpful but please, please have an article each month aimed at me and people like me. One of the reasons for buying the machine was to be able to log all my golf scores and analyse them. Can anyone help?

D Smith
Camberley
Surrey

***8000* PLUS:** *We most certainly can. On pages 18 and 19, you will find the definitive* 8000 Plus *guide to the best PCW reading around; between them, the books on display cover both the word processing and micro computing sides of the machine. So please have a read.*

As for incorporating more articles in the magazine aimed at people like you, we try to do that every month, Mr/Ms Smith; take a look at our long-running LocoScript tutorials and the new Masterfile 8000 series. If there is something specific that you would like us to consider, then please drop us another line. And yes, ED Wynn's book is good; have a look at our review of it on page 51.

Bible society

Without your magazine, life with my PCW8512 would have been very limited indeed. In addition, I have been intrigued at how often, just when I was wondering about the possibility of a particular application for the machine, lo and behold I see that it is mentioned in the pages of *8000 Plus*.

Just recently, I was wondering if somewhere I could find the Four Gospels of the New Testament on computer for easy access of any quotation. And there it is reported in your March issue! But now for my complaint. Not for the first time have I been frustrated by your omission of the address of the supplier. True, you do give a telephone number. But I do not have a telephone; and even if I had, the cost of telephoning the British mainland from Ireland would be way beyond what I could afford, as I have been some years unemployed.

So please may I ask you to include the address of the supplier with any products you review. And I will be grateful if you can send me the address for Bible Society Software at the Bible Society of Scotland as mentioned on page 5 of the March issue.

Michael Walsh
Co. Kilkenny
Ireland

***8000* PLUS:** *We consider ourselves soundly rebuked and promise to try harder. The address you need is as follows: The Bible Society of Scotland, 7 Hampton Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 5XU. Any readers South of the border should contact this one: The Bible Society, Stonehill Green, Westlea, Swindon SN5 7DG.*

Speedy recoveries

I cannot recommend too highly the prompt service offered by the Disc Doctors (see News Plus, March 1990).

A nearly full disc carrying all my correspondence over many months ceased communicating with my PCW 9512. This resulted from my failure to follow the correct procedure when making a copy. I do not keep carbon copies.

The disc was sent to Dave Smith with a brief note explaining the circumstances and was back with me, fully restored, copied and with a print-out of the contents in two days.

It may have taken only a few minutes to rectify, but that is immaterial and recalls the story of the expert who charged a shilling for pressing the button and fifty guineas for knowing which button to press. Splendid too, that two deserving charities receive this welcome support.

Thanks also to Mrs Haffenden who gave me the number to call, and no hint that the number you gave was incorrect, or that she had nothing to do with the surgery.

Graeme Maclennan
West Malling
Kent

***8000* PLUS:** *Yes, not one of our brightest editorial achievements, that one. Still, we did print an apology in last month's News Plus. For those of you who have just tuned in, we're talking about the data recovery procedures for damaged 3" discs performed by Daves Smith and Axford. All proceeds go to BACUP (cancer research charity) or the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association. Call 089 2835974 for further information. Thank you once again, Mrs Haffenden, for patience above and beyond the call of duty.*

All presents and correct

Greetings from an avid and faithful reader of your excellent publication, right from issue number one. It has helped me immeasurably.

Now I have a set of most issues sitting on my shelves gathering dust. I wonder if there is any reader who would benefit from them more than I now do? If you were kind enough to mention this in your magazine, I would be ready to pass them on (at slender cost) to any reader who gave me a ring (Oxford 310702).

Thanks for continuing to be a help.

Edward Peters
Oxford

***8000* PLUS:** *Thanks for your help, Edward. I know that back issues are available from our office in Somerton (phone 0458 74011) at a cost of £2 each. Unfortunately, some of our most popular issues from the past have now sold out, in which case, there might be a few readers willing to take you up on your offer.*

Roller remedy

In reference to N Dixon's letter (Slip sliding away, March *Postscript*) regarding the printer roller, I would suggest he tries a reputable typewriter stockist/repairers. One suitable liquid cleaner I know of is called 'DR SCAT' made in the USA for this specific job. Hope this is of some help. PS: Great mag; very informative.

Andy Barnes
Romford

***8000* PLUS:** *Thanks for your letter, Andy, on behalf of everybody who is still slipping around out there.*

Letting the dust settle

I have been a PCW user for about nine months now and am completely hooked. For my pocket and needs, the Locomotive range is ideal.

Perhaps I could make a plea to the brilliant Locomotive people to consider producing a spreadsheet to finish off the suite? Many existing Loco users would jump at such an addition.

Now to the main point of my writing. Do any of the staff at *8000 Plus* or its doubtless billions of readers know of a company that manufactures or sells dust covers for the printer of the PCW 9512 with the cut sheet feeder in situ?

I have scoured all my local computer shops and they are unable to come up with the goods. I have regularly examined the pages of *8000 Plus* and do not recall ever seeing the ASF unit mentioned in the same sentence as dust covers. I have written to several companies and have either drawn a blank or have simply been sent their unsatisfactory standard leaflets. I have even, in desperation, turned to the

pages of other magazines, but never again!

I am sure that there are suitable dust covers around, so please would those involved let us know about them. There are, after all, many sheet feeders around and plenty of owners who wish to protect their equipment.

I look forward to ceremoniously discarding the tea-towel that I currently use.

Roger Hall
Norwich

***8000* PLUS:** *Not knowing of any such dust cover ourselves, we've just spoken to Nick Hewer at Micheal Joyce Consultants who has told us that as far as he is aware, no such product is as yet in existence. So, unless anybody knows otherwise (letters into Postscript please), don't shred your tea-towel just yet!*

Northern Lights

I read March's Case in Point with enthusiasm because it seemed to offer me the opportunity of putting forward my services in a quarter where they would be likely to be welcomed.

Since Mrs Tympeny seems to be saying that her Northern Star Literary Agency has been established for some while, I was a little surprised not to be able to find it in *The Writers' Handbook* or in *The Writers' and Artists' Yearbook* – the more so as she mentions the latter in her article, and refers to it as being 'ubiquitous'.

I next took recourse to the ordinary 'phone book and to the Yellow Pages for Preston, which is where Mrs Tympeny suggests her business is situated. Nothing.

Finally, I tried Directory Enquiries. They say they have no knowledge of any Northern Star Literary Agency, nor of any telephone subscriber called Tympeny.

I'm sure you will appreciate that this all poses questions which I don't need to spell out. I'll be interested to know if you can disclose any answers to them.

Thanks, and best wishes for the continuing health of *8000 Plus*.

Mike Ninnim
Burnley
Lancashire

***8000* PLUS:** *Last month's Case in Point seems to have provoked a surprising amount of interest. For the record, the company's reputation is blameless; it is still a young company and their entry into* The Writers' and Artist' Yearbook *is currently being processed. For further enquirers, Rosemary Tympeny's phone number is as follows: 0772 702186.*

Logging on signing off

As the author of the COMM+ software mentioned in Andrew Bibby's article on Volnet in your March issue, I read the piece with more than usual interest and concern, as it failed to live up to the usual high standards maintained by your magazine.

The impression Mr Bibby gives is that while COMM+ connected up to Volnet satisfactorily, he would rather have used Dialup, Chitchat or MOP instead as they are less complex. I would have thought it obvious that the reason why such packages are unable to connect to Volnet properly is precisely because they are designed for simpler and more standard applications, while COMM+ will work on almost any computer with almost any modem and connect to almost any host machine via a comprehensive range of terminal emulations.

For the record, I would like to point out that COMM+ did connect up to Volnet and the terminal emulation worked on the first try. The customisation needed was simply to enable the PCW to emulate the DEC function keys that Volnet requires – this could also be done by Amstrad's rather less friendly SETKEYS utility if you really don't like the way COMM+ does it.

To suggest that an alternative package would be better because it would be less complex is to miss the whole point of why simpler packages can't do the job in the first place.

One more matter concerns the unprofessionalism of the article: I do thing you were entirely wrong to print a screen dump of Mr Bibby's log-on sequence for Volnet complete with usernames, ID codes and passwords. I was quite shocked to see this and even more shocked to discover on connecting up through my local Mercury 5200 node that the published details were still valid at the time of publication. For a computer magazine to do this to an educational computer running a charitable database in the current climate of anti-hacking hysteria is inexcusable. If you decide to publish this part of the letter, please confirm that the log-on details no longer work before going to print.

Andrew Margolis
Margolis and Co
London

***8000* PLUS:** *Yes, it may be time for a quick rap over the knuckles for the old* 8000 Plus *team. Paltry though it no doubt sounds, the excuse is a classic one: a snarl-up in communications between production and art teams. You see, we had originally intended to blank out the information which you're referring to. Still, we can now allay your fears. Having spoken to a minimally-concerned Jenny Harmon at VOLNET, she informs us that Andrew Bibby's log-on sequence was only supposed to be valid until the end of January anyway and that they now have the software which allows them to disenable the passwords. As she points out, PCW owners are not hackers.*

Master class revisited

I will certainly renew my subscription if you continue to run articles like Masterfile 8000 in the latest issue. Campbell Systems' demos are not good enough. They don't explain 'how to do it.' They just set you problems without any solutions! See their demo concerning Relational Files. I hope you can explain them. Perhaps it's the minute print in their 'cheapo' explanatory booklet – I can hardly read it and tire easily.

Once an avid buyer of programs I've stopped, disillusioned by being unable to understand the directions. Nor do I take kindly to printing out reams of guff (nearly always incomprehensible) from a disc. Clear directions are possible; see your first article on Masterfile 8000 and Hughes' book on Mini Office Professional and the official manual for LocoScript, to mention just a few.

Finally, on something completely different, I wonder if any of your readers continued to update the *8000 Plus* index started by the late Henning Brondum-Nielson of Perthshire. If so, I'm sure many would like to know and be willing to pay for updating their present discs.

Murray Wren
London

***8000* PLUS:** *Yes, how about it Murray? And thanks for the support.*

Victim Supported

At last, a Good Samaritan! Someone saw your excellent write up of our request for a PCW and contacted a firm in Southampton. Mr Benians of 'VEROSPEED' sprang to our rescue and we are now the proud possessors of a second-hand 8512 which he has kindly guaranteed for one year. They do not normally have second hand machines but had had one in for repairs which had not been collected so were able to let us have it for a very reasonable price. They also have another similar one (telephone 0703 641111 ask for Mr Benians) but that will be the last – there can be no repeats in the future.

Thank you 'VEROSPEED' and thank you *8000 Plus* – we will now be able to cope more efficiently with the regrettable increase in the numbers of Victims of Crime, by streamlining office procedures and filing.

WG Calvert
Victim Support
Petworth
W. Sussex

***8000* PLUS:** *Glad to be of help.*

Calling all teachers

I am an English teacher in an 11-18 comprehensive school. I am also the proud (if rather bleary-eyed) owner of an Amstrad 8512.

I have spent many nights/weekends during the last year or so trying to explore ways in which I can use my 8512 to help me cope with some of the demands of my job. LocoScript, LocoFile, Masterfile 8000, Stop Press and several other programs have been extremely useful, and I am beginning to find that lesson-planning, the writing of pupil profiles, worksheet production, stock recording and several other regular tasks are becoming far more efficient – and, joy of joys, less time-consuming – than they once were.

It occurs to me that there are probably other English teachers tapping away into the small hours and investing just as much time and effort in the production of such badly-needed teaching aids: no doubt they will have come up with different applications, or perhaps tackled some of the areas that I have mentioned above more effectively. I would very much like to get in touch with such colleagues so that we can share our ideas, swop discs etc. If you could pass the message on through Post Script, I would be very grateful. I can be contacted on 0205 760835.

I have found your magazine so useful that I have renewed my subscription, so keep up the good work!

John Ravenscroft
Lincolnshire

***8000* PLUS:** *Cheers for your correspondence.*

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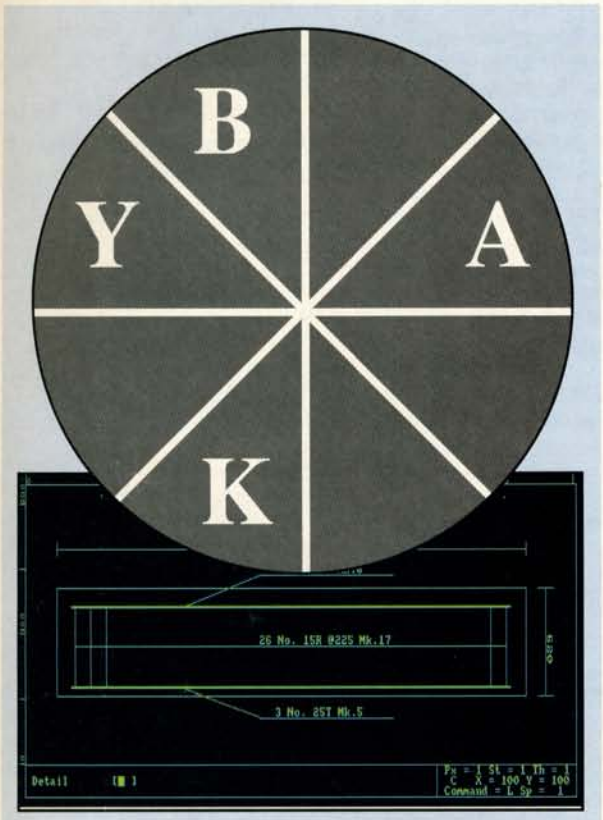
COMPETITION

Win this month's competition and your plans will be made clear!



A four letter solution could bring you software on tap to simplify draughting

This month's competition could see you bidding to take your place beside the Frank Lloyd Wrights and the Corbus of this world. Yes, up for grabs are three copies of PCWdraw, kindly donated by HTB Computing.

So what's it all about? You might well ask. PCWdraw (which we reviewed in our July '89 issue) is *the* CAD (Computer Aided Design) draughting package for the PCW. As such, it can help you with any kind of design that necessitates the drawing up of clear, unmuddled plans on a regular basis. Furniture design and building plans are just two uses which spring to mind. So what do you have to do to win a copy? It couldn't be simpler. Just provide the missing letters in our word circleabove and send it in to us by Friday 4th May.

Crossword winners

Cast your minds back to our February back page competition. We asked all those of you interested in winning packs of DGA's educational Ultimate Quiz, Word and Sums to fill in the crossword submitted by one of our readers. Our congratulations go to **Liz** and **David Owen** from Frizington in Cumbria, **Ian Wilson** from Surrey, **A L Charles** from Alderney and **SH Coutts** from Nanteuil-Auriac-de-Bourzac in France who correctly completed the crossw(see right).

1 M	O	2 D	E	M		3 F		4 F				5 P
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7 P	O	T			8 S	O	F	T	W	A	R	E
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I		L		N		Y		E		Y		
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H		P		E		13 L				H		A
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R				F		S				E		R
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L				C		R		A		S		X
	17 B	Y	T	E		18 S	O	R	T			

Next month

Cash flow forecast

We will be taking for its first test run Cashmaster, a computerised ledger system for the home and small business user. A completely needs-driven program, IntraSet Ltd say that they wrote it with ordinary non-accountant people like you and me in mind. If it sounds like the solution to your accounting prayers, read on!

Fitting the 5.25 inch drive

This is the definitive guide to fitting the 5.25" drive to your PCW. Everything you ever wanted to know will be on display – including why you would ever want to do it in the first place, not to mention where you would start. 8000 Plus will be taking you through a fully-illustrated walk-through and answering any questions you might have along the way.

Fax – the way to do it (Part II)

Where we failed this month, next month we will definitely be breaking all boundaries to bring the latest news on Amstrad's new fax machine. How will it improve your lot as a PCW owner? Buy next month's issue and find out.

Minding your Ps and Qs

Do you slope to the left or right? The way you dot your Is and cross your Ts can reveal a lot about you. We'll be looking at a new program for the PCW which, say its creators, can analyse your handwriting.

Of mice and men

The Kempston Mouse has had a bit of a facelift. We'll be putting away the old and bringing out the new and finding out just where those improvements are in hardware and software alike. We will also be reviewing the latest upgrade to HTB Draw – so stay tuned.

8000 PLUS

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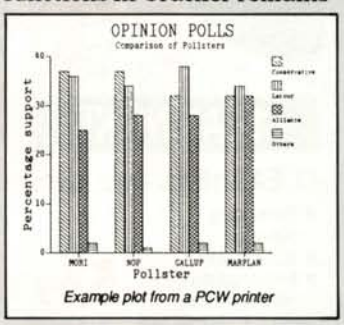

Example plot from a PCW printer

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